Jeanette Lindblom

Women and public space

Social codes and female presence in the Byzantine urban society of the 6th to the 8th centuries

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Abstract

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Against the background of a post-structuralist paradigm the present study takes advantage of various theoretical considerations evolving in the 20th century. Traditional methods of historical research are employed, whereas propositions raised within movements such as the Annalists, the so-called linguistic turn, hermeneutic analysis and gender studies have influenced the way the source material is apprehended and utilised.

A selection of different source types serves to represent a broad spectrum of society. These sources include legal texts, papyri, historical texts and chronicles, hagiographies and other religious texts, epigrams, laudatory poems and other poetry, as well as non-textual material such as manuscript illustrations and mosaic decorations. The connection between the sources and the society producing them ensures that the broad selection of relevant material reflects cultural attitudes and practices.

The aim of the study is to sketch a picture of female presence in public space in the urban milieu of the Byzantine Empire in the 6th to the 8th centuries. The ideological framework of society with its norms, traditions and ideals is juxtaposed with narrated praxis. Women's public presence is viewed from different horizons, taking into consideration aspects such as location, occasion and the diversity within the female population, such as the division into social groups and civil status.

The study begins with a theoretical discussion and a review of the main concepts, previous research and the relevant source material, followed by an overview of the cultural and ideological framework within which women operated. The focus in the subsequent chapters is on women's presence in public in four segments of society: religious, financial, political and social life. Thereafter the discussion turns to female movability, gender correlations and the relationship between ideals and praxis, and chronological shifts, viewed from the four perspectives.

Whereas many previous studies concentrate on one category of women, or treat all women as an entity, this study considers the whole spectrum of women in society and the differences in their situations. Although the basic framework of female behaviour was relatively homogeneous in ideological terms, the study shows that factors such as social class, civil status, locality and circumstances affected the way in which women were present in public and how this presence was evaluated by the surrounding society. Further, there was some chronological fluctuation in both attitudes and praxis regarding women's presence in public space. An interesting finding is the idea of gender symmetry, also displayed in public space. This was at its peak during the 6th century, when the female public presence generally seems to have been slightly more prevalent than in later centuries.

Acknowledgements

My path leading to the study of Byzantine women started many years ago as a general interest in the history of Antiquity. Always seeking roads less travelled combined with a feeling that I would not have the capacity to contribute much new in such a well-established field of research led me to look towards Late Antiquity, and even further, as I also have an interest in the Middle Ages. My search for a subject eventually led me to the Byzantine period and its fascinating society. A small remark somewhere in a history book on the proportionally large number of single women in towns and cities in the late Middle Ages stuck in my mind and made me ponder on women in an urban context. From these premises my research subject slowly crystalised.

The road to a finalized dissertation has been long and winding, spanning over more years than I might have wished for. This means I have worked with several professors and teachers over the years. I have studied and written my doctoral dissertation at the Department of History in the University of Helsinki and I am grateful to emeritus Professor Matti Klinge, who in the beginning let me pursue my research although neither Antiquity nor Byzantine studies were subjects of any great interest at the department at that time. I am also grateful to Professor Henrik Meinander for enduring my slow progress and to Dr Björn Forsén, currently director of the Finnish Institute in Athens, for having patiently tried to steer me through the process of writing my dissertation.

Although not directly connected to my subject, participation in two larger research projects, both with a connection to Byzantine studies, have helped me develop as a scholar and deepened my understanding of the history of Late Antiquity and of the Byzantine period. The time spent in Athens in 1993 – 1995 with the research team of Professor Gunnar af Hällström, then director of the Finnish Institute in Athens, and my participation in The Finnish Jabal Hârun Project under the direction of Professor Jaakko Frösén in 1998 – 2009 were fruitful and inspiring on my part.

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I Introduction

The historian Agahtias Scholasticus, describing how people took to the streets in fear of an earthquake shaking Constantinople in 557, makes the following statement:

> Large numbers of women and not just the members of the lower classes but even persons of breeding and distinction roamed about and mingled freely with the men; the ordered structure of society with its due observance of decorum and respect for privilege and the proper distinction of rank was thrown into wild confusion and trampled underfoot. [1]

This short passage provides a good starting point for the present study in that it highlights several relevant aspects. First, it shows that social class was a factor in determining the proper behaviour of women in relation to public space. Second, although not directly stated, it indicates that the ideals and social norms related to female decorum were different from those related to the male population. Third, it hints that prevalent circumstances affected how normative views were applied in practice. The situation it describes represents a crisis in which normal boundaries of behaviour might be expected to be transgressed, and at the same time it both reveals social attitudes and functions as a reminder that there is a wide range of situations in life in which ideological norms are constantly put to the test. Circumstances affect how social norms are applied, and this has to be factored into evaluations of female behaviour and presence in public space. Finally, the passage implies that everyday situations existed in which women of the lower classes were seen in public space among the male population, despite the normative ideals promoting that women remain in the private domain.

One of the foci in the present study is the relationship between ideology and praxis.[2] This entails a comparison of articulated ideals of female behaviour and presence in public space based on ideas of womanhood and the female nature with narrations from the early 6th to the late 8th centuries illustrating the ways in which Byzantine women participated in society and were present in public space. The aim is not to compile a comprehensive history of Byzantine women: it is rather to consider the correlations and deviations between verbalised restrictions on social life, represented by ideas, ideals and social norms embedded in the source material on the one hand, and depicted actions, activities and the presence of women in public space on the other. The comparison is based on an examination of different aspects of early Byzantine society, such as religious, economic, political and cultural life. The objective is to explore how the preserved source material presents

[1] Agathias, *Hist.* V.3.7 (translated by J. D. Frendo). The Greek words describing the opposite types of women are ἀι ἠμελημέναι and ἀι ἐντιμοτάται, which can be translated as 'those disregarded' and 'those most honourable'.

[2] Howell & Prevenier 2001, 147, define ideology as a "a system of values which inform action, or which are thought to inform action - ideas about good and bad, about right and wrong, about what is 'natural' and 'given' and what, in contrast, is 'changeable' or 'man-made.' In this sense, ideology is a product of culture - learned, to be sure, but learned at so deep a level that it is not easily distanced." Cf. Eagleton 1994, 1-20, Althusser 1971, 149-65, Lefebvre 1991, 116, Guess 1994, 260-2, Clark 2004, 174-6, and Putnam 1981, 160, who states that every belief is 'ideological', as is culture itself. See Spiegel 2005, 20-2, on 'praxis' and its relationship with cultural systems in recent historical theory.

female participation in various societal activities and women's visibility in public space, as well as how such reports relate to expositions of social codes for female behaviour.

This introductory chapter continues as follows. The initial questions are posed below and then, by way of a theoretical background, the limits and the possibilities of studying the situation of women and their relation to public space in a specific historical culture are considered. The perimeters of the research are presented in the third section, together with the main concepts and the terminology. Thereafter, previous research is discussed and the available source material is described. The following chapter then turns to the main subject of the study: women in Early Byzantine society and their relation to public space.

A. Questions

At the core of this study are the social constructs making up the framework of society and the principles determining how people act within that setting. The focus is on two levels, that of ideology and that of praxis. The aim is to confront the ideological picture based on ideas, ideals and norms related to the female presence in public space in Early Byzantine society, with the depicted praxis lived out by the women who were part of it. An ideological framework with social codes is pitched against female behaviour, participation and presence in public space, as gleaned from the sources, in an attempt to explain the relationship between ideology and praxis, and to interpret the implications this had for these women. When possible, changes over time are followed. Questions related to female strategies within the behavioural framework set up by the society are also addressed, as are the actions that deviate from dictated conduct.

On the ideological level, the principal inquiry relates to the ideals that women were supposed to live up to, and how ideas about womanhood affected female participation in society. It is a question of what limits the societal norms established for female actions and participation and their presence in public space. It is also necessary to consider who or what groups in society formulated the main ideas and ideals by which women were supposed to live. On the practical level, the inquiry aims to find out how the sources depict women behaving, acting or being visible in public space and to compare this to the ideological backdrop. This includes exploring the boundaries of women's movability outside the domestic sphere. The intention is to assess to what degree women seemed to follow recognised norms and ideals and to what extent, or when and where, they might have gone beyond or against accustomed ideas of proper female behaviour.

The practicalities of life are an important factor directing any participation in society. This might entail the stronger presence of women in public space than normative texts imply. A major question thus concerns the degree to which ideologically guided social codes affect women's behaviour in public. Possible differences between official ideology and common practice, as well as what factors affect such variation, are therefore pondered upon.

As scholars such as Judith Herrin and Joëlle Beaucamp observe, the reality presented in the sources does not always coincide with the outlined ideology, or with stipulations given in normative

texts. A good example of this are the legal texts that partly regulate the activities of women.[3] A basic assumption, therefore, is that despite societal constraints on women in the form of legal regulations and exclusion, moral and ethical restrictions on behaviour and perceptions of the feebleness of the female nature, for example, women make up around half of the population and a society cannot function without that half participating in one way or another in its essential activities, which in a developed society take place in public space, at least to some extent. Women may be excluded from some areas of society and its activities, and there may be ideologically formulated boundaries for female behaviour, but for a society to function there has to be a dynamic contribution from the female half of the population. The aim here is to trace forms of female activity within or despite the boundaries imposed by legal, ethical and moral regulations.

My study concentrates on this relationship between the ideology of society and the praxis of female participation, my aim being to detect the forms and patterns that women's activities took within or despite the boundaries imposed by normative texts. I will attempt to find out where the ideology coincided with practices and where patterns of behaviour diverted from the ideology.[4] My assumption is that normative language purports to regulate female behaviour in public, whereas the tolerance level of deviation from the norm tends to be broader than the strict ideological pronouncements. This may be based on traditions, customs and an appreciation of practicalities in everyday life, directed by social status and variations in types of social occasion.[5]

One way of proceeding with this type of investigation is to review individual records of female participation in public space in terms of the degree to which they accord with or divert from the pronounced ideology: how far the limits stretched in terms of what was considered acceptable, for example. Some answers may emerge if one examines how diversions from prevalent views on female behaviour are explained or related in the sources.

Ideology and praxis tend to interact with and influence each other, creating shifts or changes in either or both. A further point of interest relates to if, and if so how, historical changes came to affect the social situation of women.

Various traces of female presence in public space are surveyed for this study. Women's participation in societal life is examined from four angles, namely religious, economic, political and cultural. Given the more prominent diffusion of Christianity to all areas of society and the steady taking over by the Church of a growing number of responsibilities, it is necessary to examine female participation not only in public worship and female piety, but also in other activities connected with the Church.[6] Included in women's economic life is their work outside the home, their relationship

[3] E.g. Herrin 1984, 167-8, and Beaucamp 1992, 371-2.

[4] Cf. Bourdeiu 1977, 124, on normative boundaries and their transgression in practice, in other words the sense of limits and their legitimate transgression. Cf. also Chartier 1997, 15-6, 23-5.

[5] Cf. e.g. Certeau 1988b, 18-9, 38-40, 59, 73, on 'social knowledge' and 'practical intelligence' for navigating in social situations and keeping up the equilibrium between a multitude of elements, including norms and expectations. He also discusses 'strategies' related to power in society and 'tactics' for moving about despite the absence of power. Cf. also Spiegel 2005, 19, and Chartier 1997, 15-6, 23-5.

[6] With the partial decline of administration on the local level, the Church took over civic institutions - administrative, social and economic - in many towns to some extent, see e.g. Beaucamp 1992, 374. See Talbot 1994, 122, on certain philanthropic activities. Cf. Scott 2012s, 19-20, on bishops becoming the point of contact between imperial

with wealth and its consumption, and their participation in the upkeep of the family. Despite the exclusion of women from official politics, there are other mechanisms at play concerning their presence in political space. On a broader cultural level, female participation in the production and consumption of culture, as well as social relationships and interaction between opposite sexes are also surveyed, as are various aspects of the movement of women in public space and mechanisms of female mobility.

Women do not comprise a homogeneous group, and the inevitable questions of social difference and divergence among them are addressed. Differences in social strata as well as in civil status and position in the family may affect how women are perceived, what is expected of them and what limits their participation in society. The aim is to trace differences in the behavioural framework among women who differ in social status. When sources put forward ideas about female behaviour one should therefore register the primary target group and study how different types of women behave within the common ideological framework.

It may not be possible to address all the questions fully, given the limitations of the source material for example. Not all aspects of life are touched upon in the prevailing material and the sources do not give a full picture of or clear insights into all aspects of life among women in Early Byzantine society. The eventual aim of the study is to sketch a picture of the ways in which women were able to appear in public space and to participate in the activities during the Early Byzantine period. My intention is to show how the social system functioned in this respect. The outcome will be a theoretical reconstruction of the dynamics between female participation and visibility in public space and the social codes that regulate it.

Evidence of both pronounced social codes for female behaviour and reports on women's attendance in public space is gathered, in this way trailing the two levels to be compared. The ideological concepts create the contextual frame to which the larger focal point of social praxis can be related. Many of these are fragmented accounts spread among a variety of sources, but the idea is to generate an extensive picture of ideology and practice based on them.

In sum, the aim and main questions are as follows. In contrast to much of the previous research, the whole spectrum of women in society is included in the examination. The intention is to study the ways in which women were present in public space from a broad perspective. One major question concerns how factors such as differences in social status and type of activity, as well as in the type of occasion and location, affect the female presence. When, where and why were women present in public space? When did female behaviour concur and when did it diverge from social norms? What mechanisms were employed for moving in public space in accordance with the ideological framework, and how flexible were the behavioural boundaries? Was there chronological variation in the female presence in public space?

Traces of female participation in social life (religious, economic, political and cultural) will be sought with a view to answering these questions. These will outline the boundaries of female presence and movability in public space at the same time as factors that create diversity such as class, social circumstances and civil status are considered. Praxis will be compared with ideology,

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government and local authorities.

in other words the relationship between codes and behavioural patterns, to identify the extent of agreement and contradiction between them. Where different degrees of discrepancy are detected, factors affecting such fluctuations in praxis are sought: there may be economic or social reasons, special groups of women might be identified, or there may be special situations that modify the circumstances. I will attempt to observe the limits of tolerance and the borderlines of accepted behaviour, and I will consider possible geographical differences and chronological changes.

The consecutive chapters build upon each other. This first chapter continues by setting the framework along a contemporary scholarly horizon. The perimeters of the study are set and some points on modern historical research are considered. Aspects of cultural and intellectual history beyond a post-structural paradigm, ideology and social conventions, gender as a perspective in historical analysis, and aspects of interpreting presence in public space are reviewed. The terminology and concepts used, the current research situation and the available source material are discussed. Thereafter the study moves to the historic horizon. Chapter II presents the context. Discourses on female gender in Early Byzantine society are analysed in answer to questions about normative and ideological boundaries, introducing the social set-up for female presence in public space. Chapters III to VII describe the practical side of society from different angles, discussing activities outside the domestic sphere in which women participated as well as female presence in public space. Chapter VIII takes the discussion a step further in combining the different angles covered in the previous chapters and considering possible temporal changes. The conclusions are presented in Chapter IX.

B. Theoretical background

Doing research in a postmodern world in which relativist theories and post-structuralism have disillusioned modern academics regarding the possibility of knowing anything about the actual past, may be discouraging on occasions.[7] The eternal problem for the historian is how to comprehend, grasp and explain a vanished past that can only be studied from leftover traces. These are difficult to interpret in themselves and there are no means of verifying the accuracy of any conclusions in the light of bygone reality. It therefore has to be acknowledged that written history, even at its best, is an intellectual construction built by historians.[8] The field is thus open to various theories on how to understand the past, the writing of history and the mechanisms involved in interpreting the source material. However, although the modern historian has to admit the limitations of any investigation into the past, historical analysis still provides interesting insights that enhance understanding of society, both past and present.

It is claimed that *Annalist* Lucien Febvre responded to the positivist demand for 'submission' to documents with the statement "there is no history; there are only historians", whereas Marc Bloch

[7] The dilemma of an unknowable past that was recognised by mid- and late-20th-century theorists, the post-structuralists and especially proclaimers of literary criticism (the so-called linguistic turn) is discussed in e.g. Cameron 1989a, *passim*, Cameron 1989c, *passim*, Howell & Prevenier 2001, 1-3, 15-16, 103-109, 145-6, 148-150, Clark 2004, 1-8, 106-186, and Spiegel 2005, 2-5.

[8] E.g. Cameron 1989a, 4-5, Cameron 1989c, 206-7, Murray 1989, 197, Henderson 1989, 65, Clark 2004, 7, 19.

maintains that documents "speak only when properly questioned". The implication in both statements is that it is not the documents but the historian who poses the questions, makes the hypotheses, decides which sources are to be preferred and how to organise knowledge of the past.[9] Similarly, as Claude Lévi-Strauss remarked, no historical facts are given, they are rather composed by the historian, who is the one selecting what material to be used from a vast bulk of sources, in itself incomplete, partial and prejudiced.[10] Hayden White shows in his *Metahistory* that any historian consciously or unconsciously commits him- or herself to a whole web of choices that shape the entire narrative. These include philosophical, aesthetic, epistemological, ethical and ideological choices, as well as the selection of an explanatory paradigm and 'theory of truth', a narrative strategy and the appropriate philosophy of history, for example.[11]

In contrast to positivist scholars of the past two centuries, modern researchers recognise that all history is merely a story, a hypothetical reconstruction based on surviving traces of the past. A historian can no longer write '*wie es eigentlich gewesen*' or claim to have had total disentangled objectivity.[12] It is realised now that the present always influences how the past is interpreted.[13] As researchers we can only present a well-educated academic interpretation, capacitated through thorough examination of the material at hand and based on well-founded argumentation.[14] Even such an interpretation will be affected by external factors stemming from contemporary society and the personality of the scholar doing the research.[15]

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[9] Clark 2004, 65, Febvre 1949, 36, 41 [tr. 431, 438], and Bloch 1949, 20-6, 28, 33, 72-4 [tr. 45-53, 57, 64, 119-21]. Cf. LaCapra 1985, 17-18, White 1973, 6 note 5, and Certeau 1988a, 8, 72-3.

[10] Lévi-Strauss 1962, 257-8, 260. Cf. Clark 2004, 54, Oakeshott 1933, 111-4, Febvre 1949, 431 [tr. 36], and Febvre 1936, 57. See Henderson 1989, 74, on history as a linearly arranged narrative in which events are chosen to form an explanation in correlation with cultural codes. See King 1989, 29, on any description involving selection, and Putnam 1981, 128, 139, on the fuzzy distinction between fact and value.

[11] White 1973, *passim*, cf. work by Michelet, Ranke, Tocqueville and Burckhardt, reading them against philosophers of history (Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche and Croce), showing how they use different basic linguistic modes, theories and structures in creating their narrative. White was criticised by e.g. Roger Chartier for neglecting proper procedures of historical research, see Clark 2004, 259-60 note 121. Cf. Ankersmit 1989, 57, 61, 78-9, on the view that historic narration does not disclose technical knowledge but is a "proposal to look at the past from a certain point of view", and Putnam 1981, 55, on the concept of "truth within the theory". Cf. also Putnam 1981, 62, 68, 73, 112, 129-30, 134-8, 202-3, LaCapra 1985, 34-5, and Clark 2004, 27-8, 38, 98-9.

[12] For a critique of Ranke's statement see e.g. Febvre 1936, 58. On 'historical reality' and 'objectivity' see e.g. King 1998, 13, Cameron 1998a, 7, 9-10, Cameron 1998c, 206-8, Haldon 1990, 6-7, Howell & Prevenier 2001, 146-150, Clark 2004, 2-6, 11, 19-21, 32, 38, 54, 96, 111, 148-9. Cf. Certeau 1988a, 58, Putnam 1981, 123, 128, 201, and Oakeshott, 1933, 94-5, 100.

[13] Cf. Febvre 1949, 437 [tr. 41]

[14] Michael Oakeshott defines 'historical fact' as something to be recognised not as "what really happened," but as "what the evidence obliges us to believe," Oakeshott 1933, 107-110, 114, 118. Cf. Clark 2004, 19. Putnam 1981, 201, 203, 123 argues that facts are "something that it is rational to believe" in the tradition and culture at hand. Cf. Ankersmitt 1989, 65-73, and Clark 2004, 38.

[15] Late-20th-century theorists point out that contemporary politics, social evaluation, trends, personal preferences, education, social situation and so forth all affect the historian's choices, starting from the subject to the preferred theoretical angle. Gadamer, for example, introduced the idea of the 'fusion of horizons' (*Horizontverschmelzung*), of the contemporary historian and of the past, which interact in the interpretation and writing of history. For an overview see Clark 2004, e.g. 7-8, 22, 27-8, 111-2, 156-7. Cf. also Oakeshott 1933, 97-9, 106-9. LaCapra 1985, 36, 42-3, refers to the historian's dialogue with the past. Bloch 1949, 13, [tr. 36], discusses the need to understand the present and the living to understand the past. According to Certeau 1988a, 11, 23, 63-4, 68-9, a reading of the past is driven by a

One important factor directing the course of any investigation is the ending, which could be seen as a result and a culmination, but also as the aim of the whole inquiry.[16] This dissertation, too, is written with a certain ending in mind and this aim is inevitably coloured by personal preferences. Admittedly, an interest in the position of women in contemporary society and reflections on my own position as a woman in that society influenced my choice to conduct an investigation into the situation of women in early Byzantine society. Whereas Byzantine writers hardly gave more than a second thought to issues related to women's relationship with public space, the questions asked in the present study are clearly marked by issues connected to modern elaborations of gender issues. The end point, so to speak, is therefore to present an evaluation of how early Byzantine sources envision women in relation to public space.

An important part of the post-structural paradigm is its focus on text and literary criticism. History writing as a narrative and the source material as literature being increasingly emphasised.[17] From such a perspective sources should be read as texts that are cultural outputs, reflecting the intellectual and social climates of their context and interacting with both contemporary and preceding production of various kinds.

According to modern literary theory all texts are interdependent on other texts. Modern theories on historical research similarly interact with and incorporate previous scholarly trends and argumentation, using theoretical and intellectual tools provided by previous generations of theorists.[18] The strong significance given to literary criticism is appropriate in particular when the sources are from pre-modern societies, in that much of the prevailing material literally has the characteristics of literature. Elizabeth A. Clark, in her book *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn*, provides a good theoretical framework on how to proceed with historical inquiries into pre-modern societies in a post-modern academic world. Taking lessons from both theories of historical knowledge and different schools of historiography from the previous century and combining their most valuable theoretical and methodological points, she presents a model for historical research that is well suited to analysing early periods of Byzantine society.[19] A fruitful approach would be to use hermeneutic interpretative methods, combined with both the linguistic programme of structuralism and modern post-structural theories of text, textuality and context.[20]

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reading of current events, which is the historian's real beginning, and historiography is linked to reigning paradigms of the institutions controlling and censoring its scientific production. On Byzantine history, see e.g. Haldon 1990, 6-7, referring to his own theoretical assumptions.

[16] Henderson 1989, *passim*, discusses how the ending is usually a guideline for the structure of a history work, suggesting that the problem of not knowing where Livy's history or some other Roman histories end affects modern interpretations of them.

[17] Cf. e.g. Clark 2004, 87, 97, Cameron 1989c, 206, Henderson 1989, 74, Cameron's introductory comment in Wheeldon 1989, 33-34, King 1989, 13, Nilsson 2006, 47-50, Nilsson & Scott 2007, 325, 330-1.

[18] Cf. Clark 2004, 132-3, on post-structural views on text.

[19] Clark 2004, 156-8. Cf. Spiegel 2005, 22-6, King 1989, 13, and Cameron 1989a, 4-5, who considers the very textual character of any historic source.

[20] See Clark 2004, 62: she claims that several features of the structuralist programme remain important even for historians, such as semiotic interpretations of culture, the self-referring quality of language, privileging discontinuity over continuity, the mode of breaking down and rebuilding the object of study, and the calling into question of the correlation between linguistic signs and external reality. Cameron 1989a, 4-5, also discusses the need to be aware of the interpretative aspect of history-writing, especially in the case of cultural history. Cf. Geertz 1983, 69-70, and

Such a strategy separates the intellectual discipline of history from a lost and unrecoverable past, asserts that the investigator's perspective inevitably blends with the horizon of the subject and, being less concerned with grand narrative and causality than with discontinuity, absence and discrepancies, seeks internal textual realism.[21] The need to use traditional research methods of history based on a thorough insight into the material and the use of source criticism still has to be borne in mind. As Clark also conjectures, there is no reason why traditional methods of historiography could not be combined with modern theories. It is only views on the nature of the sources and the focal point in how they are read that have shifted.

William Outhwaite points out that methods of the cultural sciences, history in particular, are individualising and interpret phenomena in terms of 'value' and 'meaning', in contrast to the causal generalisations that are typical of the natural sciences.[22] An element of interpretation, attempts at 'understanding' and the influence of the scholar as a subject are unavoidable aspects of historical research.[23] Total objectivity, absolute facts and generalising laws can seldom be established.[24] On the contrary, the researcher has to seek, through methods such as hermeneutic analysis, the specific characteristics of the society to be examined, and can only claim that the result as a whole, although usually incorporating so-called hard facts of established events or evidence, is one probable explanation of a complex historical and social situation and of the rules guiding it. The 'understanding' approach implies the methodical interpretation of possible insights and effects, the situating of phenomena in a larger whole that gives them their meaning, and an attempt to reveal the cultural constructs behind separate but related ideological thoughts and individual actions. Any causal explanations are based on comparisons and generalisations drawn from a range of separate accounts through which the researcher tries to understand cultural behaviour as a coherent entity.[25]

Reports provided by a society take many forms. Ferdinand de Saussure refers to social culture as a set of signs, both linguistic and non-linguistic, in which language is only one system of signs constituting social life. Other systems include ritual symbols, rhetorical gestures and indicators of social status.[26] Insights into a cultural system derive from both textual and non-textual traces of the past.[27] As for the records (mainly textual, but also non-textual), they are also literary in character,

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Ankersmit 1989, 80.

[21] Clark 2004, 60, notes that annalists abandoned the focus on causality decades ago. See Lévi-Srauss 1962, 260, on his view that history represents a discontinuous rather than a continuous set of events. Cf. Clark 2004, 54, Geertz 1973, 203-4, Geertz 1983, 44, 75-6, 150-1, 156, 222-4, 232-3, and LaCapra 1985, 36, 42-3.

[22] Outhwaite 1975, 38, 41. LaCapra 1989, 195, notes: "Today it is difficult to escape the idea that values at least affect one's choice of problems and that theoretical assumptions have something to do with the way one construes facts." Cf. Clark 2004, 20, and Ankersmit 1989, 61.

[23] Outhwaite's entire book discusses the method he terms 'understanding', from the German '*verstehen*'. Cf. Bloch 1949, 118-9 [tr. 72], referring to 'understanding' using the French word '*comprendre*'.

[24] Cf. e.g. Ankersmit 1989, 66-7.

[25] See Outhwaite 1975, 33, Clark 2004, 19-20, 38, Geertz 1983, 69-70, and Harré & Secord 1972, 7. Putnam 1981, 123, 128, 139, 145, posits that things can be non-scientific, without being unscientific, and discusses the fuzzy distinction between fact and value. Although he accepts that much of current knowledge of the world is relative, he rejects total relativism, which denies any notion of objective truth. Cf. Bloch 1949, 52 [tr. 92] and Ankersmit 1989, 64-7, 80.

[26] Saussure 1972, 25-7, 33-5, 45, 100-1. Cf. Clark 2004, 46, and Spiegel 2005, 10-11.

[27] E.g. Geertz 1983, 90, Bloch 1949, 27-8 [tr. 56], and Febvre 1949, 428-30 [tr. 34-5]. Byzantinists nowadays are

even those usually classed as documents, and should also be interpreted as literary texts. They are not politically innocent, but were produced with a specific aim in mind, that could include aspirations to regulate, convince, persuade, exalt, denigrate or denounce.[28]

Although the literary aspect of both past and present history writing is recognised, Michel de Certeau, among others, still distinguishes historical narration from fiction. Although the historian cannot claim to capture the absolute truth about a past reality, the reference to 'real' is not annihilated from history writing. There still is the 'real' of the past that has existed, even though it is lost to the historian. What remains to be interpreted are traces of that reality, and this interpretation takes place in and is filtered through the historian's own reality. Hence, de Certeau argues that historical analysis cannot be separated from the situation of production, neither of the historian nor of the sources.[29] As Elisabeth Clark puts it, texts are approached by the historian as clues, indications, or partial symptoms of religious, economic, political or other social processes, which the historian tries to recreate. The historian has to question what conditions made possible the production of those remnants of the past.[30]

If one accepts that sources only provide fragments of various individuals' conceptions of the society around them, one still has to assume that they reflect aspects of life at the time. Although the historian can no longer claim to know the truth about the past, traditional methods of historiography combined with modern history theory should, at least, enable the formation of plausible hypotheses.[31] History writing is an interpretation of the past from the modern scholar's point of view with contemporary focal points in mind. Individuals in the past could seldom perceive all the social structures around them or the historical significance of events in the same way as the modern scholar looking back on the available evidence and the outcome of events. If one stands amidst the trees one cannot have an overview of the whole forest. The dilemma of the historian is that, even with a wider sort of bird's-eye view, the forest is already irretrievably lost and attempts can only be made to create a hypothetical reconstruction and the most plausible picture based on whatever traces of its existence time has happened to leave. Hence the historian's image of a past society will never coincide with the perceived reality of the individuals in it.[32]

The historian dealing with pre-modern periods has to bear in mind that most of the sources are literary in character. He or she therefore has to consider theoretical discussions on textuality, textual critique and doubts about being able to recreate a truthful picture of a vanished existence. However, it can be hard to avoid referring to an envisioned social reality in the historiographic

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aware of the possibilities a diverse source material may provide, see e.g. Nilsson & Scott 2007, 323-6.

[28] E.g. Clark 2004, 27, 105, and Joyce 1991, 208. Cf. LaCapra 1985, 17-20, 38.

[29] See Certeau 1988a, 3, 8-11, 35-6, 41-5, 57, 137, 287-8, and Certeau 1995, 438, 440-1, 444-6.

[30] Clark 2004, 122-3. Cf. Averil Cameron's introduction to Wheeldon, 1989, 33-34, in which she distinguishes historical narration from fictional narration by its assumed connection with real events: while recognising the post-structural abandonment of any absolute truth-claims she especially emphasises the need for the historian to produce convincing argumentation for a specific interpretation of the past.

[31] Traditional historic methods, preeminently source criticism and comparisons of independent sources, for example, as developed during past centuries are summarised and discussed in e.g. Howell & Prevenier 2001, *passim*, but especially Ch. I-III, 17-87. Clark 2004, 38, defines historical 'truth' as "that which is most rational to believe, given our time, place, and circumstances." Cf. Bloch 1949, 52 [tr. 92], Ankersmit 1989, 67-78, and Eley 1996, 46-7.

[32] Cf. Clark 2004, 19.

discourse.[33] The accumulated efforts of past and present scholars have created a picture of societies and events against which any new work is mirrored, either affirming or challenging views about a visualised past. Therefore, any discussion of historical societies inevitably relates to a social reality even though it is a product of the discipline of history writing.

Twentieth-century debate on historiography, especially in France, has changed also the perspective on the history of ideas. Perceived as an old-fashioned viewpoint it veered instead towards a concept of intellectual history that is closely linked to cultural history.[34] Modern theoretical views such as the discussion on culture as practice and the concept of culture in modern human sciences are of relevance to this study given the focus on ideologies in society and their relationship with cultural practices and with social history through social practice and social behaviour.[35] Further, an anthropological perspective on past society is adopted to some extent, given that my interest is in behaviour rather than official institutions, and that my concern is not so much with historical development as with a specific cultural and social situation, although chronological changes in these patterns are taken into consideration.

Further points of reference for this study include Roger Chartier's thoughts on the 'cultural history of the social'.[36] He emphasises the need to focus on practices and to study the process of constructing meaning.[37] He further urges the abandonment of customary dichotomies between high culture and popular culture, production and consumption, reality and representation, which he sees as being connected, not as opposites. He would also erase the distinction between documentary and literary texts, in that no text can boast a "transparent relationship with the reality that it apprehends".[38] Although recognising that texts are not identical with the events they record, he still criticises the too-strict linguistic approach among some historians, insisting that discursive constructions refer back to "objective social positions and properties external to discourse that characterize the various groups, communities, and classes making up the social world."[39]

Gabrielle Spiegel introduced the concept of the 'social logic of the text', meaning that a text always has a logical connection to the social context in which it is produced: it reflects extra-textual dynamics in the society and aims at producing meaning in the context in which it is composed.[40] There is a certain correlation between social existence and texts produced inside that existence. One could argue that cultural remnants offer the opportunity to 'read' a lost society in that both individuals and texts partook in the same social logic. As Spiegel notes, texts can work both as cause

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[33] Cf. Clark 2004, 173, who still, despite talk about theories of literary critique and the impossibility of verifying a 'real' past, speaks about a socio-ecclesiastical reality in the early Christian centuries.

[34] E.g. Clark 2004, 6, 124-5.

[35] Cf. Sewell 1999, *passim*, and Spiegel 2005, 20-26.

[36] E.g. Chartier 1995a, 546, 549-552. Cf. Clark 2004, 124-5.

[37] Chartier 1995a, 551-6. Cf. Bourdieu 1977, 96-158, esp. 109-10, on the 'inner logic of a cultural system', and 118, on 'practical coherence'. See also Spiegel 2005, 20-1.

[38] Chartier 1982, 32-40, and Chartier 1995b, 4, 81-97. Cf. Chartier 1995a, 549-551, 554-6, Spiegel 1990, 64, 68-9, Clark 2004, 125, and LaCapra 1985, 17-20.

[39] Chartier 1997, 7-8, 19-20. Cf. Clark 2004, 125, and Spiegel 2005, 9-11.

[40] Spiegel 1990, 77-8, 84-5. Cf. Chartier 1995a, 555, Clark 2004, 162-165, 172, 174, 178-81, including a discussion on the use of this kind of perspective on patristic and early Christian literary material.

and consequence, in a reciprocal discourse in which they influence society and society prejudices the way texts are created as well as their content.[41] This could also apply to other products of society such as art representations and architecture.

Although historic reality never be positively established or verified, the available traces from the past reflect aspects of cultural ideology and social activity as perceived by the creators of historical texts and other sources. The social code on the one hand and behaviour on the other, are two sides of one coin reflecting norm versus praxis: these are not equivalent but they are interrelated, and are interdependent in any society.[42] There is a constant dialectic between ideologically promoted norms and common life practices - a continual dialogue and exchange between the two levels, the ideological and the practical, each influencing the other and therefore representing interwoven but separate entities: cultural attitudes and social behaviour.[43] Practices presented in the sources provide material on which to base hypotheses of some sort of 'lived reality', whereas deliberations on proper behaviour mirror an 'ideological reality'. The combining of different sources helps to produce a matrix of common ideas and practices through multiple manifestations of certain phenomena in the remnants of a past society.[44] Furthermore, in that everything in a society is culturally interdependent, some sort of general picture can be drawn based merely on sampling spoils from the past. Noting recurring themes and separating them from singular occurrences outside the common picture will facilitate the sifting out of general attitudes and behaviour.

The above discussion leads to the conclusion that the two following presuppositions are needed to make any kind of history writing feasible. (1) The source material left from a past society contains some sort of information on and traces of the realities of that particular society, on both an ideological and a practical level, although these traces are open to scholarly interpretation and no scientific 'hard evidence' can be provided to decide on which reading correlates best with the situation in the past. (2) There is a certain contextual logic to the production of texts and documents. This means that they had relevance within the logic of the particular society that produced them (they made sense, so to say), despite the possible use of different rhetorical formats, antiquarian linguistic trends or the use of traditional *topoi*. Therefore, although fragmentary, a system of contemporary ideology and attitudes can be observed from these traces of the past, within which the texts made sense both to their producers and to their audiences. In this sense they reflect at least conceived realities of that particular society.[45] When one considers different types of sources one should take into account the distinction between the audience and the author, beyond which they mainly reflect different levels, disciplines or focal points within a cultural and social discourse, and

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[41] Spiegel 1990, 83-6. Cf. Clark 2004, 163.

[42] Cf. Spiegel 2005, 20-2, and Chartier 1997, 15-6.

[43] Cf. Geertz 1973, 11, who quotes Ward Goodenough's statement that "A society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members." Geertz 1983, 75-6, 90. See also Bourdieu 1977, 19-21, and Certeau 1988a, 123.

[44] Cf. Bloch 1949, 27-8 [tr. 56].

[45] Cf. Cameron's introductory remarks in Wheeler 1989, 35-6, and Clark 2004, 132-3. Clark refers specifically to Roland Barthes' views, that it is misguided to look to the authorship as the decisive clue to the meaning of a text. The emphasis in contemporary literary theory has shifted from the author to the reader. Clark quotes Barthes: "A text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination". See Barthes 1977, specifically 148, but also 142-7.

point to different aspects of a collective ideological and social framework. Beyond these presuppositions, it is the historian's task to present a hypothetical picture of the past society under reflection based on thorough scholarly research and supported by argumentation.

At the core of this study are ideology and praxis. One definition of ideology is "the body of doctrine, myth, symbol, etc., of a social movement, institution, class, or large group".[46] In a broader sense, it is often conceived of as a loose and not necessarily systematic structure comprised of ideas and ideals, which is responsible for social norms and directs civic practices.[47]

Ideology is manifested in different ways. It may take the form of a literary presented or artistically represented world view putting forward the views of the producer of the source material in a general manner. Alternatively, it may be more apparent as institutionalised values and norms such as secular laws and church rules. Unofficial social norms, conventions, customs, traditions and generally held common practices and rules of conduct are also part of the collective consciousness of a society, making up its ideological framework.[48]

Elisabeth Clark summarises the function of ideology in society as meaning in the service of power. Ideology is always related to power, which in itself is asymmetrically distributed; it is constantly under construction, having to reconfirm its positions of power; and it aims to 'fix' things by naturalising representations of the self. In this way, historically developed positions are explained as 'natural', whereas history is employed to evoke models instead of searching for change. Hence, ideology works as a tool for power and conservatism.[49] Martha Howell and Walter Prevenier describe it as follows:

> a system of values which inform action, or which are thought to inform action - ideas about good and bad, about right and wrong, about what is 'natural' and 'given' and what, in contrast, is 'changeable' or 'man-made.' In this sense, ideology is a product of culture - learned, to be sure, but learned at so deep a level that it is not easily distanced.[50]

Henri Lefebvre argues that ideology can only be understood through its practical operations in social space, something that is specific to time and place, thereby making it both historically and

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[46] Webster's *Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language*, 707. Geertz 1973, 193-233, discusses at length the use of the term 'ideology', mostly in the form of systematic or formal ideologies, in his essay "Ideology as a Cultural System". Cf. Althusser 1971, 149-65, and Geuss 1994, 260-6.

[47] Used this way by e.g. Laiou 1981, 243 (in the pair *ideology* and *reality*), 252, Laiou 1982, 202, Laiou 1985, 59, Gorelick 1996, 27-8, Garland 1988, 362-4, 375, 385, 391. Cf. Geertz 1973, 231, on ideology as the justificatory and apologetic dimension of culture, "concerned with the establishment and defence of patterns of belief and value". See also Bourdieu 1977, 188-9, Lefebvre 1991, 116, and Certeau 1988a, 61-2.

[48] Cf. Outhwaite 1975, 72, 86, 93. Geertz 1983, 75-6, 96-102, on 'common sense' and art as cultural systems. See Messis 2006, 21, on externally imposed norms (such as laws and Church canons) and norms created through social interaction (such as customary rules and dependence on a 'politics of prestige').

[49] Clark 2004, 174-5. Cf. Bourdieu 1977, 124, 164, on the socially informed body and on naturalisation as a mechanism for the reproduction of power relations and social formations; and Foucault 1976, 121-7, who discusses power in society and the unequal quality of power relationships.

[50] Howell & Prevenier 2001, 147.

geographically bound. Every place in time has its spatial code, which is "not simply a means of reading or interpreting space: rather it is a means of living in that space, of understanding it, and of producing it".[51] In Louis Althusser's view ideology and subjectivity are linked in a complicated way so that no one is outside ideology. This makes ideology appear natural and inevitable, and makes individuals accept subjection to it and the system it upholds without much reflection.[52] Michael Foucault argues that discourses join power and knowledge within them, subjecting individuals to themselves. A discourse defines a position of power or the lack of it and describes the subject in interaction with the social field.[53] What these theories have in common is "the view that the human subject is never a pure state of nature but is always being operated on and influenced by social codes and institutions." There is constant pressure on the individual to conform to certain models of behaviour.[54]

In attempting to regulate individual behaviour, ideology can work through explanatory constructions based on methods such as stereotyping, naturalisation and universalisation.[55] It is through such mechanisms that models are created both of inner (psychic) social boundaries, by which the subject conforms to 'proper' or 'normal' behaviour by means of self-discipline and self-regulation, and of external boundaries through forms of social discipline or regulation (social pressure), such as exerting pressure on women to accept designated (conventional) female roles.[56] In this way ideology creates discourses regulating social actions and behaviour. Discourse could also be considered partly synonymous with attitudes towards and an understanding of social practices.[57] There is therefore a two-way influence between ideology and social practice.[58]

Emile Durkheim, in his time, acknowledged this long ago in his sociological theories of the collective consciousness, in other words how entire societies imagine and experience the world. This collective consciousness works through different societal institutions and is represented through symbols located in the cultural system. Durkheim argues that social phenomena such as common ways of acting, thinking and feeling also exist outside of the individual consciousness, having coercive power that determines moral rules and individual experience. Society in this sense is both beyond and inside the individual.[59] Martha Howell and Walter Prevenier exemplify this:

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[51] Lefebvre 1991, specifically 47-8, but also 16-8, 31-4, 38-48, 53, 110, 143, 362-4, 412. Cf. Dillon 2000, 6.

[52] Althusser 1971, 163-4. Cf. Cranny-Francis et al. 2003, 48.

[53] E.g. Foucault 1980, 59, 82-4, 93, 102, 106-8. Cranny-Francis et al. 2003, 48. Cf. also Foucault 1976, 129-30, and Spiegel 2005, 10-12.

[54] Cranny-Francis et al. 2003, 49, 116.

[55] Stereotypes provide simplified representations as base for accustomed evaluations. Naturalisation and universalisation purport to explain cultural phenomena as either natural or universal and thus correct. See Clark 2004, 176-8, on the use of stereotyping, naturalising and universalising as common ideological mechanisms in early Christian literature. See Cranny-Francis et al. 2003, 140-2, 150, on the function of stereotyping, and Bourdieu 1977, 164, on naturalisation contributing to the reproduction of power relations and social formations.

[56] Cranny-Francis et al. 2003, 116, 150.

[57] Cranny-Francis et al. 2003, 37. Cf. Landes 1988, 2-3, discusses the importance of language in creating ideological boundaries, which in turn lead to cultural, social and practical boundaries - in her case women and the public sphere during the French Revolution.

[58] Cf. Certeau 1988a, 123, 131, and Althusser 1971, 155-9.

[59] Alpert 1939, 159-61, 176, 180-1, 193, 198-202, 204-5, 207. Cf. Harré & Secord 1972, 138.

> When, for example, a woman performs her duties as mother, wife, worker, religious observer, or citizen, she will usually adhere to norms of behaviour that seem to her entirely natural, given, and thus inalterable. But these norms are neither self-imposed nor natural - they are learned via membership in the society that defines the roles.[60]

In this way norm and praxis are not only part of every exposition on everyday life, they are also inter-related and, as Gerhard Jaritz also notes, the influence between them may be reciprocal.[61]

Gender plays a pivotal role in this study, therefore gender as a perspective in historical analysis has to be considered. Many scholars nowadays acknowledge that gender is not a given that exists in the body but is a product of society and culture.[62] Louis Althusser expressed a similar notion, which later became part of post-structural theories, as professed by Michel Foucault for example, according to which different categories of identification and individual identity, including perceptions of sexuality and the body, are created through pressure and influences from the ideology of the surrounding society and culture. Concepts originating from Foucault, such as 'complex political technology', are evoked to describe a 'technology of gender', which produces through discourse, images and signs a set of effects that are recognised as either male or female. 'Ideological state apparatuses', a concept originating from Althusser and including aspects such as educational institutions, administration, the courts, religious establishments and the family, are seen as means through which different concepts, including that of gender, are controlled.[63]

These entities (gender, sex, sexuality and the socially created body) are seen not as constant and fixed in a particular culture, however, but as incessantly under construction and undergoing continual renegotiation, either to confirm to the prevailing discourse or to change it.[64] Society is a fluid and arbitrary organism, constantly under rhetorical construction, in which rules and norms are continually under negotiation. Individuals also tend to have multiple identities, either successive

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[60] Howell & Prevenier, 2001, 92

[61] Jaritz 1997, 13.

[62] English-speaking feminist theorists usually make a distinction between 'sex' and 'gender', 'sex' being the biological difference between man and woman, whereas 'gender' signifies socially constructed sex and sexuality also including different cultural and social symbols. Cf. e.g. Messis 2006, 124, 125, 140, who also notes that no such distinction is recognised among French anthropologists, who tend to consider the two terms more or less identical and instead concentrate on the problem of the domination of one sex (the masculine) over the other (the feminine). To represent the distinction, he uses '*sexe biologique*' and '*sexe sociale*'.

[63] Cranny-Francis et al. 2003, 50, Althusser 1971, 135-49, and Foucault 1976, 119, 151, 192. See Messis 2006, 132, on how, in Byzantium, the division into male and female impregnated culture, penetrating language, categorising objects and ideas, constituting the principal scheme for understanding the environment, and producing a sexual differentiation of bodies that included clothing, symbols and behaviour. See Geertz 1973, 11, on culture as the knowledge and beliefs one has to embrace to behave as an acceptable member of society. See Bourdieu 1977, 15, 21-2 note 26, 94-5, 124, on 'cultivated disposition', 'body schema', a '*cultivated habitus'*, 'body as a memory', and the 'socially informed body'.

[64] E.g. Clark 2004, 174-6, Ramazanoglu 1993, 6, Cranny-Francis et al. 2003, 3, 50, 83-4, 100, 175, 227, and Spiegel 2005, 15-6. Michel Foucault's book *The History of Sexuality* is, of course, famous for introducing theories on the cultural construction of sex and the body, but Foucault also received much criticism from feminist scholars claiming, among other things, that he ignored aspects of gender, see e.g. Ramazanoglu 1993.

(e.g. youth and old age, or through other changes in life), parallel (e.g. woman, mother and member of the aristocracy) or mixed (e.g. by simultaneously participating in several cultures or sub-cultures).[65] Bourdieu discusses the existence of ambiguity and uncertainty in behaviour and the 'social game', which creates a need to improvise inside given boundaries and to reinforce common practice through that very practice, whereas Sewell views cultural coherence as a variable that is contested, ever-changing and incomplete.[66]

Gender behaviour is conditioned through ideology, as reflected in cultural output. There is no neutral or constant category of 'woman';[67] instead, different mechanisms are at work when one attempts to control or define what constitutes a woman and what is considered normal female behaviour. Given that those in power are the ones who are in a position to create the most prevalent definitions, gender and gender relations also become part of the power structures in a society.[68] On the other hand, power positions are not constant and have to be kept up through different strategies.[69] Among those frequently used by representatives of the dominant ideology are naturalising, universalising, stereotyping, moralising and traditionalising.[70] A typical argumentation has been to explain gendered conditions as natural tendencies or as biologically determined. Physiological difference is made social and redressed, with moral values tending to constitute the basis of a culturally pre-established binary hierarchy.[71] Strong and easily accessible simplified images of classification are created through stereotypes.[72] Likewise, moral arguments or tradition can be evoked to uphold certain gendered practices. Ideas about femininity circulate in different ways in society, maintaining and renewing the discourse of how to be a proper woman. It is through such cultural 'texts'[73] (both verbal and pictorial) that women and girls are instructed either directly or covertly on ideal womanhood.[74] Similarly, boys and men are guided to hold proper cultural views on manhood. Therefore, if one analyses discourses of the female in various sources one is able to draw a picture of envisioned ideal femininity and ideas about women.

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[65] Cf. Messis 2006, 9, 21, 28-9, 124-32, 154-5.

[66] Bourdieu 1977, 8, 15, 124, and Sewell 1999, 91-3. Cf. Chartier 1997, 15-6.

[67] Cranny-Francis et al. 2003, 72. Cf. Geertz 1973, 11.

[68] E.g. Cranny-Francis et al. 2003, 66-7, 72, 82, 142.

[69] Foucault and others see power as relational within a matrix of local strategies, which in themselves are unstable and have constantly to be reinforced. To have power is to be positioned in the matrix in a way that one is able to make things happen. See e.g. Cranny-Francis et al. 2003, 66-7, 72, 82, 142, and Foucault 1976, 110-2, 121-7, 136, 140. Cf. Certeau 1988a, 170, and Chartier 1997, 15-6, 23-5.

[70] E.g. Clark 2004, 175-8, and Bourdieu 1977, 164. On the usefulness of studying stereotypes to gain an understanding of everyday life in the Middle Ages, see Jaritz 1997, 16. Garland 1988, 364, 377-8, 385-6, 391-3, considers some stereotypes of women in the middle Byzantine period. Certeau 1988b, 22-4, discusses the 'formal rules' hidden in games, tales and legends, for example, and the rhetoric of language itself, thereby steering social practice. Cf. Foucault 1976, 125-7, and Eagleton 1994, 8-10, 17.

[71] Cf. King 1989, 13, who discusses the female body as presented in the Hippocratic corpus, and Messis 2006, 162-255, on both Classical and Byzantine authors' comments on human physiognomy, the differences between men and women, and conclusions based thereupon regarding the male and the female nature.

[72] For a discussion on stereotypes and how they function see e.g. Cranny-Francis et al. 2003, 140-2.

[73] 'Texts' is interpreted in a wide sense here and includes different types of social and cultural communication.

[74] Cranny-Francis et al. 2003, 198. Cf. Messis 2006, 132, who discusses 'gendered' or 'sexed' bodies (*corps sexué*), and Bourdieu 1977, 89-95, on internalising the rules of particular social codes and *habitus* from childhood.

The primary expression of gender is through the body and through *habitus*.[75] Consequently, one way to to find out how a certain group, such as women, are culturally positioned in society is to examine the physical or symbolic presence of gendered bodies in certain spaces and in contemporary reflections upon such presence. Studying how female appearance in public space is presented could reveal the cultural structures of the feminine, as well as the relationship between ideological discourses of gender, social access and power. Foucault declared, in his time, that the body is a battleground of power, and feminist scholars tend to agree with this.[76] One does not have to formulate it so harshly to realise that the body, its presence, non-presence or way of presentation, is among the major expressions of power hierarchies in a society. Limiting movability in certain spaces, instructing on behaviour and regulating appearance by means of direct or implied dress codes, are among the ways in which the corporeal becomes part of social control.[77]

The need for recognition and approval, as well as for the avoidance of retribution, tends to create in individuals a certain compliance with prevailing concepts of gender. Some scholars formulate this as a 'gendered masquerade', a public display in which the governing gender roles are acted out.[78] Conforming with aesthetic and moral models becomes part of being accepted in society, and it is in the public space and in the public part of society that acting according to rules and ideals assumes importance.[79] One should nevertheless be cautious about seeing women only as compliant and submissive bodies and subjects. Women participating in the fabrication of contemporary goods and cultural production as artisans, artists or patrons of production, for example, at least have roles as active agents in the creation of how women are represented in public and how the aesthetics of femininity is regarded in society.[80]

No individual complies with any one definition. Gender is just one aspect of a person's self-perception or an individual's classification by the surrounding society. Other aspects include class, wealth, social status, civil status, positioning in a family network, locality and ethnicity, among other things. There are multiple realities, in the same way as there are many types of women.[81] This

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[75] E.g. Cranny-Francis et al. 2003, 207-8, who defines *habitus*, a concept originating from Bourdieu, as "a set or system of dispositions, a way of organising action, a way of being, habits (particularly of the body) and predispositions or inclinations. These are repeated behaviours, actions, tastes, which produce the everyday world." Cf. Spiegel 2005, 14-5, and Bourdieu 1977, 72, 78-87, 95, 97.

[76] Foucault 1980, 56-9. Ramazanoğlu 1993, 15. The body is a common starting point for examining power structures among French post-structural theorists in general, not only in Foucault but also in the writings of Michel de Certeau and Bourdieu, for example: see Cranny-Francis et al. 2003, 207-8. Cf. also Foucault 1976, 183-4, 191-3, Certeau 1988b, 139-41, 147-9, Clark 2004, 118, and Spiegel 2005, 19.

[77] Cf. Hanawalt 1998, 22-3, on female behaviour, movability in public space and different dress codes in Western Mediaeval society, and their importance as social markers; Cranny-Francis et al. 2003, 83-4, on learned body behaviour; Certeau 1988b, 139-41, 147-9, on how the law takes hold of bodies, making them live out tableaux of rules and customs, as actors orchestrated by a social order, "making the bodies tell the code".

[78] Cranny-Francis et al. 2003, 167-8.

[79] Cranny-Francis et al. 2003, 197-8.

[80] Cranny-Francis et al. 2003, 201.

[81] E.g. Cranny-Francis et al. 2003, 69-71. Cf. Messis 2006, 131-2, 145-6, referring to Balandier, who introduces a three-part model of societal dynamics, in which social 'class', age 'class' and sexual 'class' constitute the different parameters. The position of an individual in a hierarchic society depends on all three. Female inferiority is therefore not absolute, but relative. A woman might be in an inferior position to a man of the same 'class' or higher, whereas

diversity must be taken into account. There may be different expectations and varied sets of values for different categories of women, which affect overall assessments of female presence in public space.

Historians and theorists such as Foucault, de Certeau and Derrida emphasise the querying into discontinuity and difference in texts as a major research tool.[82] The prevailing ideology reveals itself in the source material as attempts to define 'normal' female behaviour and to direct appearance in public space, whereas discrepancies in the narrative expose differences in social praxis. One should not be surprised to find some slight dichotomy between declared ideals of female behaviour and women's practical activities in society. The general ideology of a society tends to spring from a relatively narrow stratum of the population, whereas more specific social codes are likely to differ between various social groups. Traditional thought and handed-down ideas may well constitute the framework for an ideology on proper female conduct, but practical reasons also find their way into actual behaviour. Hence, women's activity in society does not necessarily fully coincide with the ideological framework.[83]This relationship between ideologically directed social codes and lived practicalities regarding women and public space is one focus of this study.

Although gender perspectives were slow to be introduced into Byzantine studies, interest in gender studies in the aftermath of the feminist movement of the 1970s eventually spread to this discipline.[84] Several studies on women and gender aspects in Byzantine society have been published in recent decades, reflecting ground-breaking work and producing valuable information and new understanding, as well as revealing new points of view. This research, conducted by several scholars, is of significance for the present study in that it provides a solid base of already gathered and processed information and research material. Inquiries such as these are still somewhat marginal in Byzantine studies, however, and much remains to be done.[85]

Following the above discussion on gender theory, the next question is how to interpret the way an ancient society dealt with the issue of female presence in public space, on both an ideological and a practical level. One presupposition is that societies develop some sort of common framework for social behaviour, including appearance in public space, which one can study.

The idea of the 'social logic of a text' discussed above can be transmitted to any kind of social or cultural activity. Every action must have a meaning, a certain social logic, in the context in which it is acted out. Human behaviour, therefore, tends to have the most meaning in the society and the historical situation in which it takes place. If one is to understand an action one must

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she might exercise power over male individuals from lower 'classes'.

[82] E.g. Clark 2004, 62, 121, 157.

[83] Cf. Angold 1995, 433: on the confinement of women in the later Byzantine period he notes that "there was a discrepancy between stereotype and reality". See Garland 1988, 393, on discrepancies between lived life and convention in her discussion of imperial ladies of the Comnenos family in the 12th century: they are attributed with stereotypically modest and withdrawn female behaviour even though it is clear from the narrative that they had access to power and were willing to use it. See also Kazhdan 1998, 4-5, and Chartier 1997, 15-6, 23-4.

[84] E.g. Herrin 1984, 167, exemplifies the early influence of the scholarly feminist movement in Byzantine studies: "It is now widely recognised that the analysis of male-dominated societies should not be undertaken as if men alone counted in their histories." Cf. Connor 2004, xi–xii.

[85] Cf. e.g. Talbot 1997, 117.

understand its position in the broader context of social laws ruling a specific situation or a specific society in history.[86] Rules guiding social behaviour are manifested on two levels: (1) on an abstract level in the form of guidelines and models, expressed both through language and in art; and (2) on the physical level of disclosed behaviour. Both levels are recorded in the sources, the former as outspoken ideas, ideals and norms and the latter as records of practices and actions. Concordance between ideals and practices strengthens a common social code. Discrepancies in the records, however, might indicate a shift in general standards, or differences due to social circumstances including factors such as class, location and social setting, and may reveal broader social patterns beyond the narrow definitions of a common ideology regulated by those with political, intellectual, or religious power.[87] Three types of expression revealing the ideology and possible discrepancies should be considered: (1) verbalised ideology, (2) pronouncements of generally accepted actions and behaviour and (3) described behaviour of individuals in the society and expressed reactions to it of either approval or disapproval.

In considering circumstances that direct behaviour and individual actions on the practical level of society one should distinguish between those that influence people from the outside and those for which individuals are personally responsible.[88] External circumstances might force a person to step outside the common boundaries of behaviour, either in a positive way as accepted albeit unusual behaviour, or in a way that is not accepted by society. Individual preferences and personality traits might also lead to exceptional or irregular behaviour. Therefore, anyone studying the causes that lie behind social behaviour should be mindful that "there are different types of causality, natural, organic and psychic."[89] The factors triggering specific behaviour include those that are external (e.g. unusual natural phenomena such as drought or an earthquake), as well as mental factors (such as personal inclination, intellectual training, or group pressure) that affect individual conduct. Most people follow rules and conventions when regulating their social behaviour, which are therefore included among the mechanisms that guide actions.[90] Another aspect of the social logic of behaviour is the importance of rituals, be they of the more official communal type, or inherited or appropriated daily rituals. Laws of ritual govern daily actions and interactions with others, making things comprehensible, making people comfortable, and providing a cultural context.[91] Rituals, large and small, are part of the entity of social behaviour and common practices in any society. Hence, through considering this kind of social logic and its manifestations in the

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[86] See above and Outhwait 1975 *passim* on the concept of 'understanding' (*Verstehen*) as a theory of historical investigation. Cf. Harré & Secord 1972, 7, 147, 167-8, 176-83, and Spiegel 2005, 14.

[87] Cf. Eagleton 1994, 8-14. Geertz 1983, 222-4, on normal and abnormal discourse. Messis 2006, 13-4, 22, recognising two normative systems, one 'official' of a political and religious nature and the other 'half-official' forged by interaction in everyday life and based on a system of social inclusion or exclusion. He discusses the differentiation of social practice due to gender and age, for example, or financial and social position, as well as the concept of sub-cultures defined by ethnicity, language, religious tradition, social or professional status, for example.

[88] Cf. Outhwait 1975, 28.

[89] Outhwaite 1975, 59, quoting Adler 1936, 148.

[90] Cf. Outhwaite 1975, 54, and Harré & Secord 1972, 125, 127, 147, 151, 167-8.

[91] Cranny-Francis et al. 2003, 207, also referring to Certeau 1988b, specifically 149. Cf. Geertz 1983, 73-93, 156, on 'common sense' as a cultural system and 'network of social understandings', and Putnam 1981, 117-9.

sources one may also study and interpret female presence in public space.

The space in which social life is acted out is seldom neutral. Space itself may be both gendered and otherwise biased in ways that affect how different social groups visit or occupy it. There is a 'politics of space', which also creates a relationship with gender.[92] With regard to women, one may well have to contemplate their position as the 'other' in the public part of society, which, at least in pre-modern societies, was primarily considered a domain for the normative part of the population, in other words the free, male individual. Hereby arises the dilemma of coping with this 'other', the female presence in this mainly male domain. It is, of course, a modern academic concern, and probably did not consciously occupy the minds of people living and acting in early Byzantine society. Even so, the fact remains that there occasionally appears to be tension between ideological views and depictions of lived life in the studied material. Such discrepancies, together with descriptions of different social phenomena, potentially reveal more complex social structures regarding female presence in society outside the domestic sphere, hidden behind purely ideological statements on proper female behaviour.

Hence, if one is to understand the position of women in Early Byzantine society in relation to public space one should, among other things, explain the relationship between social codes and praxis, and interpret the social implications of possible discrepancies between them. The 'public interpretation of reality', an expression originating from Heidegger to which Outhwaite refers, would be a widely accepted ideology of social behaviour, a sort of 'social agreement' on female public presence.[93] Every divergence from this consensus would be recorded as abnormal and usually described as unacceptable. However, the scale from ideal behaviour via acceptable deviation to definitely improper conduct is a gliding one, and professed ideology may be stricter than common practice.[94]

Finally, one further aspect to consider is visibility. Any presence in public space includes seeing and being seen. In the context of modern history, Foucault discusses the disciplinary aspect of the gaze, through which the knowledge of being seen produces control and self-regulation in the direction of normalisation and conformity to norms.[95] Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic model refers to the gaze that splits people, the struggle between looking and being looked at. Seemingly the one looking is the one in control of the situation, but at the same time everyone depends on being looked at and acknowledged in order to exist. In this way the gaze involves power, and carries implications about who has the right to look and inspect and who is to be looked at. According to Lacan, humans are connected not only to systems of language, but also to systems of representation and visuality.[96] One could argue that being seen is an inherent feature of human nature. By being actively seen one

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[92] Cranny-Francis et al. 2003, 207, 211-2, 237-8. Cf. Bourdieu 1977, 89-90, 160-1.

[93] Cf. Outhwaite 1975, 73, 77, and Messis 2006, 92-3, who discusses 'lived reality' versus 'constructed reality', the latter being a discourse on what is considered 'normal' or 'abnormal', and how sources tend to present a 'normalized' picture that is occasionally simplified and with a codified perception of customary situations, thus not necessarily reflecting the complexity of lived reality.

[94] Cf. Sewell 1999, 91-3, on divergence in cultural practice and cultural coherence.

[95] See e.g. Ramazanoğlu 1993, 22.

[96] Cranny-Francis et al. 2003, 155.

is recognised by others. It is a form of appreciation. The more one is recognised by other individuals in society (that is, the more they are willing to look at, upon and up to one) the more esteemed one is and the higher in a concealed or open social hierarchy. Let us, for example, consider ceremonial processions in connection with both religious and profane festivities. It is the significant people in the society, the highest ranking within different categories, who are given the honour of a place in the procession. Ordinary people are bystanders, observers and onlookers. The honorary seating for ceremonies, performances and the like also tend to be highly visible, displaying the spectators of rank. Hence, visibility and access to it are aspects of the power structure in a society.

Visibility in public space is therefore something that is controlled through different social mechanisms to ensure that public behaviour and visibility are in keeping with the standards reigning in that particular society, confirming what is good or admirable while trying to keep unwanted behaviour under control. Social control is exerted in the form of carrot and stick, in other words by means of inducement and castigation, and in forums that include different types of text (written, spoken, visual images or actions). Different media direct what is considered normative behaviour, and visibility in itself may be one way of implying ideals. Public art, for example, may give directives about ideals. The visual aspect also emphasises the body and control over it, implying that it is not only the presence of women in public space that should be considered, but also the physical attributes of that presence, in other words the female body and how it is presented (such as clothing and *habitus*). Suitable sources of information on these aspects include different types of literature and of visual art.

C. Perimeters and concepts

Following the above discussion of the theoretical background, this section concentrates on the chronological, spatial and social latitudes in terms of the chosen period, the geographical perimeters and the social diversity among women living in Early Byzantine society. Some of the major concepts underpinning this study are considered at the end of the section.

The time period chosen for the study, the 6th to the 8th centuries, was a critical period in the history of Byzantine society.[97] The wars and reconquests of Justinian I had economic consequences. The so-called Justinian plague decimated populations in the 540s and recurred 11 times before the mid-8th century.[98] Avar and Slavonic tribes intruded into the Balkan area during the 6th and 7th centuries. Important areas were lost in the Arabic conquests of the 7th century, including Egypt, a major food supplier. Recurring military uprisings and religious conflicts were additional stress factors. One consequence of this was cultural introversion from the mid-7th century onwards.[99] There

[97] See Haldon 2008b, *passim*, for a short political and historical overview. See also, Herrin 2001, 26-8, 38-9, 47-50, for a short overview, Sarris 2011,125-182, 226-310, on the political situation between 500-700, and Scott 2012a, 4-20, and Scott 2012b, *passim*, for an analytical summary of the reign of Justinian I.

[98] Horden 2005, *passim*, and e.g. Vasiliev 1950, 102-31, 344-388. Cf. Brubaker & Haldon 2001, 17, and Laiou 2009, 60. On population decline and the plague see also Laiou 2002a,47, 49-50, Laiou 2002b, 1147, and Morrisson & Sodini 2002, 193-4.

[99] Haldon 2002, 15, Dagron 2002, 397-401, Laiou 2002b, 1145-7, and Sarris 2011, 177-82, 268-92, 302-610.

was a steep population decline in the late 6th and the 7th centuries, with no sign of an upwards turn until the mid-8th century. This ecological, social and political stress brought about a period of change.[100] The 6th century still reflected the Late Antique multicultural and multilingual society, but increasing external pressure and internal social changes are among reasons why scholars have describe the following period as the 'Dark Age' of Byzantium. There was some stability returning to society during the 8th century, creating the basis for a new but slow cultural upswing. The Empire diminished in size and transformed into a Mediaeval society with a more homogeneous Hellenised character.[101] Increasingly powerful neighbours had to be considered. Diplomacy, cultural exports and also cultural exchange were the order of the day, whereas the Iconoclast controversy beginning in the mid-8th century caused rifts in the inner coherence. Literary sources and archaeology reveal a decline in the monetary economy during the whole period, probably resulting in a more developed exchange economy and self-sufficiency. Decline was a feature in many urban centres, whereas villages developing into intermediate centres of habitation which blurred the distinction between a small town and a large village on all except fiscal levels, the former being recognised as part of the administrative network but the latter was not.[102] At the same, time urban culture increasingly focussed on the capital Constantinople. These factors make the period interesting as society adapted to changing circumstances. As a transitory period reflecting the antique culture but already incorporating new elements it also gives an insight into the female side of society. The changing conditions could have changed perceptions of prudent female behaviour and the way in which women's participation in public space was shaped.

Within the chosen chronological framework two law codes issued around two centuries apart by Emperors Justinian I and Leo III provide normative information on the position of women in society. Their chronological position on different sides in a period of trouble and transformation presents an opportunity to detect possible changes in attitudes to women on the part of the official administration. As for the so-called iconoclastic period, beginning in the mid-8th century, it had its own problems and issues that this study does not address in any depth.[103] The discussion is limited to arguments related to the female presence in public space.

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[100] For a short overview of some of these factors, see e.g. Brubaker & Haldon 2011, 453-64, 573-5. On climatological changes in the 6th century, see Farquharson 1996, 266-8, and Koder 1996, 274-8. See Ward-Perkins 2000, 381-91, on how war, the climate and population change relate to economic decline.

[101] E.g. Haldon 1990, 1-2, and Brandes 2002, 17, 19. Cameron 2006a, 1-3, 20-35, discusses the difficulty of characterising Byzantium with its diversity and constantly changing shape in simplified and easy frames, also noting that the name Byzantium as signifying the East Roman Empire is a modernity, introduced by scholars and in use only from the 16th century. She also describes the period under discussion here.

[102] See e.g. Haldon 1999, 1-15, and Brogiolo 1999, 246-8, 250. See Brubaker & Haldon 2011, 531-63, 616-22, for an overview of urban and rural life in the period, and the changing concepts of urban space. See Holum 2005, *passim*, on the classical city of the 6th century; Milojević 1996, *passim*, for transformations in urban space up to the 7th century; Brandes 1999, *passim*, on cities in the 7th and 8th centuries; Brubaker 2001, *passim*, on the transformation of urban public space and the public domain in early Byzantium. On urban transition in some specific areas, see e.g. the contributions of Alston, Belke, Bowden and Guidetti in *Acta Byzantina Fennica*, vol. 3 (N.s.) 2010.

[103] See Angold 2009, 233-5, for a short overview of the iconoclast controversy, and Brubaker & Haldon 2001, *passim*, and Brubaker & Haldon 2011, *passim*, for a deeper analysis of the period. Brubaker & Haldon 2011, 9-10, note that the iconoclast controversy was only one of several elements relevant to the evolution of the Byzantine culture and society in the 8th and 9th centuries, but later generations made it an important issue.

Given the nature of the preserved source material, which is discussed below, some aspects of society are inevitably more easily approached, whereas others elude investigation. Urban environments produced more material than rural areas, for example, although there are sources such as hagiographies that also give insights into more rural aspects of life.[104] The narratives in the preserved sources tend to relate more to urban contexts. One reason for this emphasis on cities, despite some signs of ruralisation and de-urbanisation appearing already in previous centuries, is the appreciation of and focus on the urban lifestyle inherent, as a Late Antique inheritance, in the Byzantine mentality.[105] Early Byzantine society still largely perceived itself as an urban culture. Hence, this study concentrates on the urban setting. Rural life had its own characteristics, including bigger discrepancies between areas in local traditions, whereas the politically and culturally connected urban settlements tended to show greater congruity, even though there were some distinctions.[106] By and large the common culture of the Empire, and hence general attitudes towards female behaviour, were visible in the towns and cities, and especially in the capital Constantinople. It was also in the city that public space and a public sphere were most prominent, distinct and clearly definable, making the relationship between social codes and public behaviour more poignant and easier to study. This does not preclude the use of evidence from rural environments when it is of significance.

The cultural emphasis on urban life, especially that of the capital of the Empire, gives prominence to Constantinople. It was the natural focal point of Byzantine society, attracting both political and cultural life and, as such, it was the fount of much of the cultural influence in the Empire. It was also the origin of many of the important and preserved sources. This city therefore serves as the main example but not the only one. Given the nature of the preserved material, in which hagiographies with their larger geographical foci play a significant role, other cities and towns are also considered. The main spatial emphasis is therefore on the large cities, especially the capital, but examples from all parts of the Empire are presented when available to create as complete a picture as possible.

Geographically the study is limited to the territory of the Byzantine Empire. This changed over time, as areas were regained or lost to neighbouring powers. Some regions, therefore, are

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[104] Even though, as Haldon 1990, 26, points out, the great majority of the population lived in rural areas and probably around 95 per cent of the state's income derived from tax or other appropriations on land.

[105] On the subject of the ruralisation of urban settings, archaeological evidence shows that from Late Antiquity onwards there was an increasing tendency to turn former public buildings into private residences, while the inhabited town areas shrunk and agricultural enterprise invaded many urban areas. For an overview of these trends and the general economic and demographic situation of the 6th century, see Morrisson & Sodini 2002, specifically 173, 179-81, 189. Cf. Brubaker & Haldon 2011, 22-5. Brubaker 2001, 43, prefers the notion of transformation and redefinition of public urban space and its uses. Ellis 2004, 46-50, warns against over-emphasising 'ruralisation', rather seeing it as transformation. He discusses the housing type of 'subdivision' that became common in the early Byzantine period. Liebeschuetz 2001, 5, 7, 29-32, also warns against interpreting the signs as de-urbanisation, and rather speaks of changing attitudes to public space, which he defines in terms of concepts such as simplification, impoverishment and changing characteristics. In Chapter 2 he provides a thorough review of the evidence discovered so far on changes in cities during this period, as well as of problems related to interpreting these changes. See also Herrin 1984, 168-9, on Byzantine self-perceptions as an urban culture.

[106] See Haldon 1990, 9-10, for a comment on cultural diversity within the Early Byzantine Empire, even between urban centres.

examined for the beginning of the period under investigation, but not for the end. One could argue that different regions of the Empire, especially in its vast extension under the rule of Justinian I, show a large diversity with characteristics and special circumstances that cannot easily be compared. Such considerations have to be acknowledged in the analysis of the material. However, as Joëlle Beaucamp showed in her study on the juridical status of Byzantine women in the early centuries, although material from Egypt reveals some signs of local social and juridical practices, there are also many similarities with other regions, and it is difficult to know if the reason for the variation lies in regional differences or contrasts in the types of available sources.[107] One streamlining factor was the law code. As Angeliki Laiou points out, "law is, by definition, a unifying institution, and one, therefore, which tends to obscure, if not extinguish, local customs."[108] Local differences in practice and customs have to be appraised and pointed out when they occur in the material, but the aim is to consider views and practices that are common to society at large displaying strong correspondence regarding general attitudes and common conventions due to the influence of a shared Greco-Roman social and cultural tradition.

The geographical areas and urban settings are not equally represented in the extant material. As a researcher one must settle for the provided reports, which should nevertheless give ample material to create a picture of the prevalent social culture. Similarly, different social categories are unequally present in the sources. There tends to be more information on women at the highest level of society, whereas those of lesser distinction often remain anonymous and hidden, although once again the hagiographies prove useful in this respect.[109] The lowest strata of society tend to be the hardest to uncover. Such an imbalance could easily lead to a focus on aristocratic women in Constantinople, but this would narrow the perspective and the overall comprehension of the conditions of women in the Byzantine society of the period in question. Furthermore, because of the more readily available information on the upper social strata, several studies of women in the highest levels of society have already been conducted. Including a variety of sources makes it possible to obtain reports on a relatively broad social scale. Women from all social categories and strata are therefore considered whenever the material allows it. Fortunately, previous studies have paved the way, making many sources more easily attainable by scrutinising part of the material from some specific viewpoint, even regarding the female part of the population, as discussed below. This made it easier to include relatively branched-out source material and the whole social spectrum.

I will now discuss some of the terminology adopted in this dissertation. The term *Byzantine Empire* is used throughout to signify the later phases of the East Roman Empire. In a similar fashion, words such as *Byzantine society*, *Byzantium* and *Byzantine* are used throughout to define the society and culture of this political entity, whereas *Byzantine studies* refers to the scholarly discipline investigating the political and cultural aspects of the Late Antique and Medieval continuation of the eastern part of the Roman Empire.

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[107] See e.g. Beaucamp 1992, 373-4.

[108] Laiou 1982, 202, who continues thus: "Customs and practices must be uncovered, to the extent possible, and only then will regional divergences emerge."

[109] E.g. Talbot 1994, 105-6. Cf. Connor 2004, xii. She frequently notes that ordinary women usually stay anonymous. This does not, in my opinion, diminish the value of the evidence sources give on their lives.

At the heart of the study are concepts related to ideology and praxis. Ideology connotes *ideas* and *ideals* creating *norms* to direct social *practices*.[110] Ideas are considered here as more or less widespread thoughts about the character of certain issues, phenomena or groups of individuals, in this case women. Ideas of this type constitute opinions, which are considered by the individuals expressing them to be true and general characterisations of the subject at hand. Ideas expressed about the female gender, character, nature and behaviour are evaluated in the study. Ideals, on the other hand, constitute society's expression of ideas at the highest level of perfection that a certain phenomenon, group or individual can reach, usually on the underlying understanding that they are to be strived for as far as possible. Ideals for women in Early Byzantium therefore included ideas about proper and perfect behaviour, and about which women came close to such perfection. Ideas and ideals are essential parts of the ideological framework of a society.

Religion as part of culture often plays an important role in creating the world view of a society, and therefore lends itself to the analysis of social codes.[111] Analysing religious texts may open the door to interpreting the ideological framework of a society. Other material that clearly has an ideological bearing includes different types of normative texts such as secular law codes and decrees from Church councils. Apart from such obvious material, however, and related to the above assertion that there is no neutral representation of facts, most sources reflect, in one way or another, the ideology of the society in which they were produced.

As Angeliki Laiou noted as early as in 1985, a social historian studying Byzantine women has two tasks. The first one is to establish the *realities* of the roles that women played in society, in other words in politics, economics and religion, and the second is to discover the role of *ideology* in the lives of these women. She thereby mentions two central concepts with regard to this study, if one considers her realities as corresponding to social praxis. Laiou concentrated on the period from the 11th century onwards, thus her source material includes documents in the creation of which women actively participated and she could, while considering the ideology, focus on "the perception women had of themselves as females, and the degree to which this perception may have diverged from male ideology on this issue".[112] The sources covering the period discussed here, on the other hand, contain very little material to which women may somehow have contributed. What there is consists mainly of a few documents preserved among papyri (e.g. transactions related to business, testaments and marriage agreements, or divorce documents, in which a female party could be seen as involved in the shaping of the content) or some artistic or architectural output commissioned by female patrons. It is therefore almost impossible to distinguish the female mentality and women's perceptions of the ideological aspects of society from those held by the male population. The main bulk of the source material was written and produced by men, thereby largely reflecting the ideology of the male members of the society and their perceptions of women and the feminine.[113] The sources generally reveal society as seen through male eyes, but where it is possible to distinguish women's

[110] See the above discussion, 13-5.
[111] Cf. Cameron 1989, 5. See also Geertz's 1973, 87-125, essay on "Religion as a Cultural System."
[112] Laiou 1985, 59-60.
[113] Cf. Beaucamp 1992, 272, Herrin 1992, 105, Talbot 1994, 105-6, and Messis 2006, 35-6.

attitudes, these are compared to male perceptions of ideology and society. Studies from later periods reveal, however, that women's attitudes, with a few exceptions, tended to follow the ideology presented in sources produced by men. A good example of this relates to attitudes to and *topoi* regarding women and womanhood presented by Anna Comnena in her *Alexiad* from the early 12th century: many of her comments on typical womanhood reflect and comply with those put forward by male writers of the same period.[114]

This male perspective on society, which is predominant in the sources, also means that women's activities are much more sparsely represented in the material. As Judith Herrin remarks, "female influence is doubly veiled from us: it is often silent, unvoiced by the women themselves, and frequently ignored, either deliberately or as a matter of course in the sources written by men."[115] However, Laiou's early standpoint seems to be that the invisibility of women in Byzantine society could not be attributed merely to the source material, but also to the lack of research.[116] In other words, the activities of women can be traced in many ways, as later research has proven. There are, for example, instances in which their activities simply could not be ignored by the male recorders. Even if many of these reports tend to register the extraordinary cases and unusual events rather than the everyday lives of women, as Herrin so rightly notes, the source material still offers an opportunity to study women in the society and their activities.[117] Nevertheless, the nature of these reports, many of which constitute asides and detours from the main male-dominated narrative, makes it necessary to survey a large variety of sources in the gathering of material concerning women. This emphasises the importance of previous studies, regarding both the different types of sources and the special subjects, in limiting the amount of work that otherwise would have been required for an inquiry into such diverse source material.[118] However, by scanning a variety of sources for fragments of information it is possible to build a mosaic of both the ideology of female behaviour and the social reality of women's activities in public.

As discussed above, the contemporary historian knows that only tentative reconstructions of the past can be assembled and that no restored creations of absolute reality can be claimed. *Social reality* in this context therefore signifies the perceived behaviour and actions of the studied subject as presented in the source material and not historical reality *per se*. This is envisioned as the *praxis* of social behaviour, in as far as it can be evaluated by means of research methods, in contrast to any ideas on how these groups or individuals usually act or should ideally act in specific situations. For the purpose of this study it means examining the behaviour of women in the society and their actions, as they are described in the source material, against the backdrop of given social norms set up by the presiding ideology ruling the society.

Society is interpreted as the conglomerate of individuals inhabiting a certain geographical

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[114] See e.g. Connor 2004, 251-252, 255-260. However, she also comments on Anna Comnena's awareness of and pride in the unusual characteristics of many of the imperial women around her, as well as herself, and calls her in this sense a proto-feminist.

[115] Herrin 1984, 167. Cf. Talbot 1994, 105-6.

[116] Laiou 1985, 59.

[117] Herrin 1984, 168. Cf. Saradi-Mendelovici 1991, 88.

[118] Cf. Herrin 1984, 167.

area, usually making up a political unit, enacting their social roles and interacting together within this entity. *Culture* defines the outlet of this society, in the form of either immaterial products (such as literature or artistic performance) or material objects (such as works of art, architecture or everyday artefacts). *Social norms* are perceived as ideas about what is ideal or generally accepted behaviour, whereas *social practice* connotes the behaviour that is common in a specific situation. *Customs* are the common conventions of behaviour in a social group repeated over a longer time period, usually from one generation to another. E.P. Thompson defines a custom as something situated at the interface between law and practice, thus as something that could be considered both praxis and the norm. Customs are characterised by a certain locality.[119]

On the individual level, Pierre Bourdieu defines *habitus* as a strategy for living in society. This comprises a set of dispositions and ways of acting, habits and bodily expressions, predispositions and inclinations, which constitute repeated behaviour producing everyday life. Through the *habitus* repeated actions make sense in relation to those of other people. It enables identification with individual or collective experience (e.g. festivals and rituals) as well as homogeneity in lifestyle within a certain class or group (e.g. through dietary taste, housing, style of dress, aesthetics). A person's *habitus* could therefore be seen as part of conforming to or expressing ideology and a 'bodily' identity in practical life and in public space.[120]

Other terms used extensively in this study include *place*, *space* and *sphere*, particularly in connection with their social or public aspects. Although they are connected, they have to be distinguished. The topographical context for a social activity is the physical *place* (locality) in which it is acted out and that can be named, defined and described.[121] The *social sphere,* on the other hand, exists on a more abstract level and is created between individuals and groups, not necessarily associated with any specific physical environment but consisting of networks of relationships: one dictionary definition of sphere is a "particular social world, stratum of society, or walk of life".[122] Between these two, the physical place of actions and the abstract sphere of social relations yields the concept of *social space*, meaning the more general environment in which social interaction takes place (in a physical place and inside a network of a specific social sphere).[123] Scholars including Michel Foucault, Michel de Certeau, Pierre Bourdieu and Henri Lefebvre have redefined the purely geometrical concept of space in terms of a social concept, "an open and mutable field of specifiable relationships and structures; as a site actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it; as a structure that is determined by the distribution of economic, social, cultural, ideological, and theological capital".[124] Janette Dillon, admitting a great debt to Lefebvre's thinking, uses the concept in her study on drama and social space in London in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, declaring

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[119] Thompson 1991, 97. Cf. Jaritz 1997, 9, and Geertz 1973, 3-5, 10-18, 89, 113, on the concept of culture.

[120] Bourdieu 1977, 72-3, 76-87, 95, 97, 124. Cf. Lefebvre 1991, 214-6, on how 'gestural systems' code affiliation to society, embody ideology and bind it to practice. Certeau 1988b, 30, 57-60, discusses 'ways of operating', as well as Bourdieu's theory of *habitus*. Thompson 1991, 102, Cranny-Francis et al. 2003, 207-8.

[121] Cf. Dillon 2000, 6-7.

[122] *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language*, 1369.

[123] Cf. Lefebvre 1991, 402-3.

[124] Hanawalt et al. 2000, ix-xi. Cf. Lefebvre 1991,11-2, 26-7, 32-2, 82-3, 296-7, 348-9, 352-3, 402-4. Bourdieu 1977, 82, 171-183, on symbolic capital. Certeau 1988b, 117-8, also uses 'anthropological space'.

that "the conception of space underpinning the discussion here is one that understands it to be dynamic, a coming together of physical place and social life in ways that are always in process".[125] Dillon further refers to Michel de Certeau and his suggestion that one should make "a clear distinction between the terms 'place' and 'space', whereby place (*lieu*) refers to a distinct or 'proper' location, while space (*espace*), in relation to place, 'is like the word when it is spoken', the effect of its multiple determining contexts". However, she goes on to argue that the distinction is, in many ways, "purely theoretical and masks the way the two are necessarily bound up in practice".[126] Even so, both terms are needed to separate the two conceptual levels.

Public space and its counterpart *private space* are both part of the social space for human activities. The former is conceived of here as the areas held in common by society, or part of society, for the use of all individuals or larger groups of individuals not specifically defined by family relationship, for the purpose of different actions related to general or specific social, political, cultural or economic functions, activities that are, to a certain degree, transparent for the group of individuals that have access to that specific public space.[127] Public space can be anything from city streets and market squares to churches, public baths and courtrooms. The space, its buildings and streets, constitute a performance space in which citizens can communicate commonly held values and civic solidarity through ritualised acts or informal social interaction.[128] Private space, in turn, is the area that an individual or group of individuals, often connected by family relations, have in their possession, have access to and have control over for the purpose of carrying out actions with significance for and related to their own private life, and for which they usually have the authority to decide who is let into that space. The division between public and private space is not necessarily clear-cut and, depending on the society, they may overlap or the borderline may be blurred or the transition from one to the other may be gradual. According to the above definition, a street would be a public space whereas a covered carriage travelling on the road could, in some respects, be considered a private space.[129] The area customarily defined as private space, however, is the private house or apartment, usually the home of a family.

Whereas social space is considered the environment of human social interaction, a *social sphere* could, as mentioned above, be defined on a more abstract level as the network of relationships and social interactions of an individual, a specific social group within society, or society at large. The *social sphere* of an imperial lady (including relationships with her peers and the servants within her household, for example) was different from that of a servant girl (including a relationship with her mistress and other members of the servant community, and also possibly with vendors and other

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[125] Dillon 2000, 10, cf. also 6.

[126] Dillon 2000, 151, note 9 to Prologue. Certeau 1988b, 117, cf. also 49, 55, 82, 93-4, 118.

[127] Cf. Habermas 1989, 1-14. See also Landes 1988, 5-6, on Habermas' concept of 'public sphere' and how it widens the view from a pure division of state versus family, looking at the possibility of a political life beyond the state, as well as seeing it not only as a political but also a cultural formation. Messis 2006, 319, notes that one should not confuse 'private space' with 'private sphere', nor 'public space' with 'public sphere', as the private sphere might intrude in public space or vice versa. See Økland 1998, 138, on Greek and Roman architecture and the 'public home'.

[128] Holum 2005, 102-4.

[129] Cf. Lefebvre 1991, 155-9, on a tripartite system dividing social space into commonly held 'global space' and 'private space', with transitory 'medium space' in between.

groups outside the social sphere of an imperial lady), even if their *social space* partly overlapped.[130] Correspondingly, the *private sphere* and the *public sphere* are areas of social interaction on an abstract level, the former being the private network of individuals in society, whereas the latter concerns matters for common consideration in society at large. The part of the private sphere that relates to family life and the family house is usually designated as the *domestic sphere*, private in nature, and consisting of the network of family members and connected individuals acting out functions relevant to the family and the household.[131] Any evaluation of the ideological framework and the practical realities related to women's activities in Early Byzantium should take into account the different levels of place and space of social interaction and the more abstract networks of relationships comprising the social sphere.

Space and places are seldom gender-neutral. There is a 'politics of location' determining where and when different bodies are permitted, where they are either welcomed or not.[132] The division into public and private space is significant in this respect. A binary division is frequently made between the concepts 'public - male - culture' on the one hand and 'private - female - nature' on the other.[133] This is sometimes interpreted in feminist theory in terms of male dominance and female oppression.[134] However, defining public and private space is usually more complicated than this. The pure division public/male versus private/female is generally too simplified and does not take into consideration aspects of class, social and civil status or sexuality. On the contrary, such a simplified dichotomy tends to mirror only a specific stratum of society.[135]

A few more aspects of female participation in society should be considered. First, there are different levels of presence in public space: real people may be present acting out some function,

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[130] Cf. Lefebvre 1991, 86-7, who points out that the general notion of 'social space' (in the singular) consists of a plurality of social spaces overlapping and interacting with each other.

[131] Cf. Ringrose 2003, 5, noting that domains inside and outside the household should not be equalled to or confused with modern concepts of public and private; and Messis 2006, 85, who after discussing problems with the division private/public, chooses a tripartite division of the spheres in Byzantine society, inside each of which the public and the private are defined and function somewhat differently: a) the state and institutions of power, b) 'civic' society and c) the family, including different family relations.

[132] Factors other than gender also direct the 'politics of location'. Cf. Lefebvre 1991, 35, 210, 320, 375, 358, on prohibition regarding space, on ideologies dictating the locations of particular activities, on space divided for work and for leisure, into day-time and night-time space, for example, and on how space classifies, distributing various social strata across available territory and keeping them separate. He also notes that space does not have power 'in itself'. It is created by society. "Spatial practice regulates life - it does not create it." Consider the saying "everything has its time and its place", showing deep connections between activity, space and time.

[133] Cf. Cranny-Francis et al. 2003, 211-3, 237-8, Hanawalt et al. 2000, x, Hanawalt 1998, 19-20. Landes 1988, 2-3, discusses how language genders space: associating the public with the male has positive connotations, whereas public in association with women has negative connotations (a public woman being a prostitute, a commoner, or a common woman). Messis 2006, 24-25, 27, 83-4.

[134] Cranny-Francis et al. 2003, 211. Cf. Landes 1988, 7, and Lefebvre 1991, 247-8.

[135] In the history of western society of the 19th and early 20th centuries this was usually distinctive of the middle class or the bourgeoisie, whose female members did not work outside the home. Cf. Cranny-Francis et al. 2003, 211-3. Coole 1993, 17, discusses the traditional image of 'the secluded Athenian woman', noting that the situation was different for female slaves and the wives of *metoics*, for example, who could be sent or employed outside of the domestic sphere, and slaves were even used as prostitutes. Remarking on the differences between city-states, she mentions Sparta, where women had more freedom and more of a public presence. On Medieval European society, Hanawalt 1998, 22 notes: the "urban environment was one in which men and women mixed throughout the day".

but women can also be present on an abstract symbolic or artistic level. Female visibility or presence in public space is therefore not restricted to the participation of individuals in activities outside the private sphere, and also includes presence through the material culture, such as in artistic portrayals of women or female cultural patronage (manifested in buildings, works of art and public inscriptions). Physical representations are continuous reminders of the women they portray and, in a symbolic way, make those women present. Cultural expressions including or related to women therefore also come under discussion as ways in which the female part of the population is perceivable in the public side of society.

Furthermore, *public activity* and *activity in public* are two different things, although they are both discussed in this research. It is female attendance in public space that is of interest here, regardless of whether it is private or public in nature. In other words, the concern in this study is not only with official female public participation but also with private female presence in public space.

Finally, one has to consider what constitutes a public or a private space with regard to different women. What is the position of a midwife entering the home of another woman she is helping to give birth? For the woman giving birth this is clearly a private, domestic sphere, whereas the midwife has to leave her own private space to get to the house of the other woman. Is this other house a public sphere for the midwife, then? She will probably be associating with persons outside of her own domestic sphere, bringing her into a wider social sphere, even if this might not be purely public. There is probably no straightforward answer. In a way, such situations create a grey zone between private and public, showing how these modern terms do not always adequately define the places, spaces and spheres in which women move. It shows the sliding scale to be used when defining what is public and what is private.[136] This applies specifically to Early Byzantine society, in which private space began to gain ground from public space as former public buildings were turned into private dwellings, for example, of which there is archaeological evidence. Conversely, the retreat of a hermit, supposedly isolated and private, becomes the goal of pilgrimage for people seeking healing or consultation.[137]

D. Previous research

A little over 30 years ago Angeliki Laiou made the following remarks:

> The study of women, as a social group which lived and functioned under specific conditions and disabilities, is still in its infancy as far as Byzantine history is concerned. Almost every question which may be posed - whether relating to the legal

[136] Cf. Messis 2006, 84-7, on the ambivalence of the concepts *public* and *private*: it was particularly difficult to find a frontline between them in Byzantium, the categories being fluid and under constant negotiation. He quotes S. Moller Okin and W. Wienstein, who note that what is reported as private in one sphere of life might be seen as public in another, thereby reasoning that the dichotomy public/private does not have a singular meaning, but it does have multiple significance.

[137] Cf. Lefebvre 1991, 118, who notes that "space implies time, and vice versa", indicating that spatial practices change over time and that specific meanings, uses and restrictions of a certain space are linked to the temporal culture using it.

> status of women, or their economic activities, or their ideology - cannot yet be answered definitively. Even what might have been thought to be an obvious subject, that is, the representation of women in art, is largely untouched. The situation is more complex when it comes to the Byzantine society's perception of women. Here, modern scholars labour, for the most part, under misconceptions, the result of a selective reading of the sources.[138]

Much has happened since then, and diverse research on the position of women and on gender in Byzantine society has now been published.[139] Nevertheless, there is more to be done as many aspects of female life are still neglected.

Much of the research has focussed on specific groups of women in Byzantine society, or on a limited circle or strata. This is natural given the need to narrow down such a wide research field to create operable limits for scholarly examination. Limitations regarding the available source material, a problem common to all ancient periods, further strengthen such tendencies. Collective conclusions have been made based on such studies, even though they overlook the diversity of women embodying the society in question. Women of the imperial family and the highest strata of society, or those in some way connected to religious institutions, have received much of the attention.[140] In other cases women of 'middle class' families (to use a modern term) have been used as the model, ignoring the relatively large number of servants and even slaves there still were, as well as the group comprising independent women such as artisans, artists, performers and prostitutes who were relatively abundant, especially in urban centres such as Constantinople.[141] Comprehensive interpretations based on a limited social group easily become narrow in scope, slanting the prevailing views on women in Byzantine society or even in some cases introducing inaccuracies. Individual studies have great value, and I am not suggesting that general conclusions should not be drawn from them or denying that modern studies present good overviews of the situation of Byzantine women: I merely wish to emphasise the need for caution in attempts to compile findings from such targeted inquiries into general axioms on the lives of women.

Another aspect in some previous studies on women is a tendency to treat the Byzantine period as an entity. Such an approach does not consider how historical and social changes also affected the female population on both an ideological and a practical level. Realities for women of the 6th century were not the same as for those of the 11th century.[142] This trend has weakened in more recent studies, frequently resulting in a focus on either the middle or the late Byzantine period, on which there is more abundant, diverse and accessible source material.

Pre-1970s studies on women in Byzantium are rare and are limited to a narrow range of subjects reflecting a rather traditional approach to history. The spotlight tended to be on empresses,

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[138] Laiou 1985, 59.
[139] Cf. James 2009, 31-9, 47-50. For a good overview of previous research, see James 2008, *passim*.
[140] Cf. Neil 2013a, 1.
[141] There are notable exceptions, such as Stavroula Leontsini's study (1989) on prostitutes and prostitution in the early Byzantine period.
[142] Cf. James 2009, 36.

or a religious perspective was dominant.[143] More studies on the female population were published in the 1960s, but still the focal subjects were imperial ladies and ecclesiastical figures. The first real attempt to conduct a comprehensive survey on women in the Byzantine Empire was made by Jose Grosdidier de Matons in 1966, reported in his frequently cited article, but the problems remained. The article focuses on the most traditional roles of women and treats the Byzantine period as monolithic. No distinction is made between evidence from the 6th and the 12th century and there is a tendency to concentrate on material from the later periods, based on which generalisations then are made. The result is an overview focussing on some traditional aspects, mainly on women in the home and part of the household.

The 1970s brought a notable change in both the amount and the themes of studies on Byzantine women, even if traditional themes lingered on due to the nature of much of the preserved source material.[144] The new interest in women's studies slowly gave rise to gender perspectives in the field of Byzantine studies, too.[145] There were no proper discussions on gender issues until the early 1980s. Angeliki Laiou presented a paper at the 16th international conference on Byzantine studies in 1981 which opened up new ground and broadened the perspective on the study of women. Her general presentation "The Role of Women in Byzantine Society" and the follow-up "Addendum to the Report on the Role of Women in Byzantine Society", triggered an increase in more systematic gender studies and a methodological discussion on the possibilities of studying the female half of the Byzantine population.[146] Laiou points out several important issues related to studying women in Byzantium in her short "Addendum", and poses the question of validity with regard to gender studies on Byzantine society. Although written close to forty years ago, her "Addendum" is still valid in many respects and worth contemplating, and some of her points are of interest for the present study. She contemplates the legitimacy of using gender to identify and study a segment of Byzantine society and further notes that, although legal provisions circumscribed women's public activities in many ways, their participation in political and economic life depended on many factors, of which gender was only one. In Laiou's opinion, class was an even more significant factor. She also notes that women partook in activities not envisaged in the law, and sometimes even contrary to accepted ideology, and that there were significant changes over time. In sum she states: "the history of women in the Byzantine Empire forms part of the history of the entire society, and the precise role of gender as an explanatory variable must be examined in connection with all the other factors which fashioned

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[143] Famous early examples include Charles Diehl's essays on Byzantine Empresses (originally published in French in 1906). An art-historic counterpart is R. Delbrueck's "Porträten byzantinischer Kaiserinnen" (1913). Exceptions from usual patterns include Georgina Buckler's "Women in Byzantine Law" (1936) and Lous Bréhier's "La femme dans la famille à Byzance" (1949), which still treat the millennia-long Byzantine period as an entity. Vitalien Laurent combines traditional themes in "La direction spirituelle des grandes dames à Byzance" (1950).

[144] E.g. Runciman 1978; Bensammar 1976; Fisher 1978; Fitton 1976; Halkin 1973.

[145] E.g. Joëlle Beaucamp's articles (1976 and 1977) on women's juridical position especially in the early Byzantine period; Averil Cameron's articles (1975, 1978 and 1979) on Empress Sophia or the adoration of Virgin Mary as *Theotokos* in the Byzantine capital. Some scholars, such as Anson 1974, focussed on female saints, discussing phenomena such as female ascetics dressed as monks, which was typical in the early Byzantine centuries. Evelyne Patlagean's article (1976) on this subject is still essential reading and is often quoted. The increase in gender studies brought new trends such as discussion on sexuality (e.g. McNamara 1976).

[146] Laiou 1981, Laiou 1982.

Byzantine society in the various phases of its history"[147]

Laiou continued her pursuit to chart the position of Byzantine women and was joined by other scholars.[148] Some problems persisted, such as regularly treating the Byzantine period more or less as a whole, often with the main focus on later periods, as well as leaving the discussion of many issues on a very general level and the earlier periods without special consideration. In addition to the scholarly debate on studying the female population, there was a general increase in research on subjects related to Byzantine women. The subject matter included their connection with monasticism, asceticism and piety, as well as various juridical aspects of their position, social and family structures, women in Byzantine art or as hymnographers and, of course, the continuation of earlier research on aristocratic and imperial ladies, Empress Theodora being a particularly popular subject.[149] Another trend in the 1980s was to publish new editions and translations of several primary sources, especially hagiographies and texts related to Christianity, thereby also facilitating research on Byzantine women.[150] The majority of the new research is presented in the form of articles, however, and comparably few monographs focussing entirely on Byzantine women have been produced.[151]

A seminal example of extensive research on a specific aspect of women in the early Byzantine period is that conducted by Joëlle Beaucamp and reported in two volumes published in the early 1990s: *Le statut de la femme à Byzance (4e-7e siècle), vol. I. Le droit impérial*, and *vol. II. Les pratiques sociales*. The first volume is concerned with the law code and as such relates to normative texts, whereas the second compares the normative code with social practice, relying mainly on Egyptian papyri but also making comparisons with other source material such as hagiographies and patristic texts. Beaucamp's aim was to find out whether, and if so to what extent, the law was known and applied in Egyptian society and Byzantine society in general.[152]

A large part of Beaucamp's study concerns female incapacity in a legal sense, in other words the constrictions and limits imposed on women acting in juridical matters. She examines female capacity or incapacity to act in public affairs, in juridical cases and making contracts for example, and discusses the limitations on female participation in public life and in public and/or legal transactions. She points out that her subject is not the image of women.[153] In other words, she is not

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[147] Laiou 1982, 202-3.

[148] Laiou 1985, Herrin 1984, Galatariotou 1985, Garland 1988.

[149] E.g. Talbot 1985, Herrin 1982, Fledelius 1982, Patlagean 1981a, Hutter 1984, Missiou 1982, Runciman 1984.

[150] E.g. Rosenqvist 1986 and Ward 1987.

[151] An early monograph is that of Leontsini, published in 1989. Others include general works by J. Chrysostomides 1994 and Katerina Nikolaou 1993, as well as studies focussing on the highest level of society conducted by Donald M. Nicol 1994, Lynda Garland 1999, Judith Herrin 2001 and Liz James 2001. Works focussing on single empresses include Barbe.1999 and Cesaretti 2001. Liz James, 1997, edited a collection of articles on gender in Byzantium and Alice-Mary Talbot, 1996, edited a collection of translated female hagiographies. A recent addition is Carolyn L. Connor's book from 2004, which contains an overview of female activity and life in the Byzantine Empire throughout its history based on prominent female figures. Stavroula Constantinou, 2005, published a book based on her doctoral thesis on the concept of the body in female hagiography.

[152] Cf. Tauvenschalag 1940-1, 280-95, who presents several cases of papyri evidence from the 6th century of the spread and influence of Justinian's law texts.

[153] Beaucamp 1992, 272.

concerned with broader aspects of ideology apart from how juridical texts perceive the status and position of women, her main interest being in how social practices related to the normative texts. Much space is given to a discussion on the 'feebleness of women' expressed in laws as an argument for their exclusion or special protection, and she compares this to similar arguments in Christian canons and texts by Church fathers.[154] She offers some interesting insights into social behaviour, but her reflections on the relationship between idea, ideal and praxis are not taken beyond the main aim of the study, which was to examine to what degree social practice coincided with the stipulations and wordings of the juridical texts. Beaucamp's books represent significant groundwork on Byzantine women based on two major groups of early Byzantine sources, the law texts and the Greek papyri in Egypt.[155] Although her research extends to the end of the 6th century, and she occasionally mentions cases from the 7th century, on the whole it concerns earlier centuries and therefore, unfortunately, does not fully cover the period under discussion here. Even so, it is of value to the present study. A further contribution to current knowledge about the juridical position of women in Late Antiquity is Antti Arjava's doctoral thesis from 1996. He also concentrates on earlier periods, ending the part that discusses the East Roman Empire with Justinian's law codification, but it provides a basis for understanding the legal position of women.

A steady flow of articles as well as occasional monographs on subjects related to women are being added to the current research literature. The range of topics is constantly broadening, although religious women and imperial ladies are still among the favourite themes. Many scholars have published one or a few articles in the field, whereas relatively few take a broader interest in Byzantine women.[156] Among recent general overviews are the chapter on women written by Alice-Mary Talbot in the book *The Byzantines* published in 1997, and a monograph by Carolyn L. Connor, *Women of Byzantium* published in 2004. Both compile research up to the point of writing. Talbot's text gives a good general overview of women's position in society stretching over the whole Byzantine period, but concentrates on later material and only briefly mentions the sources without much evaluation or criticism. This is understandable in a text of this nature, a general presentation for a broader public, but it gives little help to a scholar seeking to penetrate further into the subject. Connor's book includes slightly more discussion and information regarding sources. In terms of topics, it chronologically presents a story of Byzantine women based on some popular themes, partly dictated by the scope of previous research. Fortunately, nowadays one has on-line access to an up-to-date and comprehensive list of available research material on Dumbarton Oaks' Internet pages, the Bibliography on Gender in Byzantium.[157]

Although the range of studies on Byzantine women nowadays is wide and fairly representative, thematically the tendency is still to lean towards either the early Christian era and

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[154] E.g. Beaucamp 1992, 287.

[155] Although a very thorough work, there are occasionally surprising oversights. Beaucamp does not seem to respond to claims in Despina White's article from 1982 on the property rights of women and changes in the Justinian legislation, for example, when her own discussion touches on the same subjects.

[156] Especially e.g. Joëlle Beaucamp, Averil Cameron, Catia Galatariotou, Lynda Garland, Judith Herrin, Angeliki E. Laiou, Evelyne Patlagean and Alice-Mary Talbot.

[157] www.doaks.org/research/byzantine/resources/bibliography-on-gender-in-byzantium (as at May 16th, 2016).

religious women or the middle or late Byzantine period, often with a particular focus on aristocratic women. The period from the 6th to the 8th centuries is covered in only a handful of gender-related studies and there are no larger-scale studies on the relationship between ideological views and praxis in relation to women. With regard to the types of women that have been studied, there has been some bias in favour of certain categories although a much broader range is now represented in the research literature. Studies tend to focus on special groups of women, and the whole range of classes are seldom studied more comprehensively. Finally with regard to the participation of women in the public part of society, there has been some research on their involvement in public life, but no examination of the dynamics of their presence in public space.[158] Such aspects are therefore addressed in the present study in the hope of narrowing some gaps and enhancing understanding of Byzantine women and their circumstances on a broader level.

E. The source material

Material that is relevant to the study of women in Byzantium is not to be found in one particular source or even on one type of source: it is fragmented within a variety of material, frequently in the form of short paragraphs, remarks or side comments in sources on topics not specifically related to women.[159] Only rarely do the sources deal directly with such issues. The material available for this study on ideology and praxis concerning women's presence in public space in the 6th to the 8th centuries therefore comes from a relatively heterogeneous assembly of sources. Each type of source material has its own characteristics, focusing on society from a specific angle and a particular perspective, and this has to be considered when the evidence it provides is evaluated. Juridical and religious texts such as hagiographies have different objectives, but together they convey a spectrum of information on prevailing ideology and praxis.

The relative scarcity of source material covering at least part of the period in question is another problem. The nature of the selective processes working through time, sometimes seemingly at random, affects the collection of preserved sources at the disposal of a historian, which therefore does not represent all aspects or versions of the original output in the society concerned. Sometimes the material to be preserved is selected by chance and in other cases the process depends on how each consecutive generation handling the material and safeguarding it for posterity perceives its importance and value. Every society creates its own canon of texts and cultural material, reflecting values that are specific to that culture. Intermediate societies have therefore affected what is available for researchers today.[160] To this has to be added the choices made by modern scholars as to what to retrieve from archives and collections, what to study, edit, and translate, or which archaeological site to excavate.

Regardless of the mechanisms that predispose the available material, as pointed out above, any text or product is a construct of the culture in which it was created and therefore in some way

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158 On Roman Greece, on the other hand, see e.g. Økland 1998, *passim*, on women in public space.

159 E.g. Beaucamp 1992, 171, and Herrin 1984, 167.

160 Cf. Cameron 1989, 6, and Bloch 1949, 23, 30-2, [tr. 49, 59, 61-3].

reflects the ideas and praxis of that society, frequently in aspiring to confirm and strengthen dominant values.[161] Therefore, even a moderate selection from a variety of sources offers an opportunity to examine ideological and practical aspects of a particular society, in that each source embodies some aspect and is a reflection of its contemporary culture.

Any modern investigation must consider the awareness gained through modern critical theory of the relativity of any knowledge that is obtained from the material, and the realisation that history writing in itself is an interpretation of texts and of the cultural context that created them. A scholar writing as a representative of the discipline of history has to consider the debate on the possibility of objectivity and of any real comprehension of the past, while still attempting to investigate and explain previous human societies. The criticism cannot simply be discarded but has to be countered in some way. A discussion about the premises on which the past can be approached through prevailing sources and the kind of history that results must be part of the inquiry. As noted above, there is no absolute 'historic truth' with regard to the cultural mechanisms of an ancient society, only an interpretation based on a critical analysis of the remnants it has left behind.[162] Discussion on theoretical approaches to sources has tended to be relatively scarce among scholars of Byzantine history, although this has started to change in recent years.[163]

Traditional historiography with its emphasis on documents has occasionally been criticised for being narrow in scope. In the case of pre-modern society in particular, there should be a broader inclusion when considering what constitutes relevant source material. One problem associated with exploring the early Byzantine period is the lack of several of the types of traditional primary sources. Very few documental records have survived and there is almost no typical archive material giving information on births, deaths and marriages, landholding records and other personal data on which social history and women's history tend to be based.[164] Apart from some rare exceptions, the material covering the history, society and culture of this period consists of texts, in other words sources of a literary nature, rather than clear-cut documents.[165] The somewhat elusive nature of these sources and their relative scarcity, resulting in a lack of statistical data that is appreciated in modern historiography, means that the historian has to rely on individual narratives.[166] The question of how to evaluate such heterogeneous sources then arises.[167] Thus, the traditional division of material in primary and secondary sources has been criticised as simplified and not always applicable.[168]

As Averil Cameron notes, given that the available remnants tend to be sparse, scholars dealing with ancient history have to use whatever sources are obtainable and therefore should also

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[161] Cf. King 1989, 13, on medical texts from ancient Greece, and Geertz 1973, 20, 28, noting that "it is not necessary to know everything in order to understand something".

[162] Cf. Cameron 1989, 3-5, Clark 2004, 1-2, 5-6, and Geertz 1973, 15-6.

[163] One recent exception is Nilsson 2006. Similarly, Averil Cameron approached the question of modern theories in some of her writings. See also the discussion in chapter I.B, 9-11.

[164] Cf. Herrin 1984, 168.

[165] Cf. Clark 2004, ix, who discusses this problem of the source material for many scholars studying early Christianity or pre-modernity in general.

[166] Cf. e.g. Cameron 1989a, 1-2.

[167] Clark 2004, *passim*, concerns these topics, more or less.

[168] See e.g. Cameron 1989a, 2, 4-5, and Cameron's introduction to Rich 1989, 86-7.

be flexible in the way they use them.[169] One could also reverse the modern argument that all written sources, including documents, are primarily texts and should be treated as such. Although documents are redefined as text, all sources could be considered documents in a wider interpretation of the word.[170] Poetry could be used as traces equally valuable to enhance knowledge of a past society as a fragment of papyrus containing a marriage agreement. The two merely provide different perspectives on insights and interpretations. Similarly, chronicles and historical treatises are just as literary as poetry is, the difference being in the arrangement and treatment of the material and in the rhetorical devises used.[171] Therefore both can equally well lend themselves to a discourse on intellectual, cultural and social history, as long as the typical aspects of the different genres are taken into consideration.

References to women in Byzantine sources are considerably scarcer than references to the male population. This is hardly surprising, and is commonly recognised for male-dominated societies given that the male population was mainly responsible for producing the source material.[172] Alice-Mary Talbot attributes the relative neglect of women in Byzantine historical sources to the fact that "women by and large remained at home, bearing children and caring for their families and households, and thus played no role in the political and military events that predominate in narrative texts".[173] Although this is partly true, I believe it is too general an explanation. Talbot goes on to admit that there were several fields in which women could be and were active outside the home, although these women also stay relatively invisible in the sources. One cannot deny the lopsided ratio between the genders. One source of comparison is material concerning female religious institutions. Examples from a later period indicate that not only did the material produced by men readily exclude women in the narrative, in reality female convents were fewer in number than male monasteries, based on the fewer *typika* (foundation documents) related to them. Likewise, fewer women than men became saints, hence the fewer hagiographies on women.[174] Nonetheless, women do feature in many sources, albeit in lower numbers than the male population. Some of the potential in the material also remains unexplored. I agree with Angeliki Laiou in her comment that some of the invisibility of women reflects the lack of research rather than a problem with the source material.[175]

One can distinguish between sources that are directly as opposed to indirectly related to women. In the former the women have been active in the production of a source, instigated it, or were the reason for it. The latter type of sources are produced by men on subjects not directly related to women, but are not without value for the study of women in society in that many of them contain

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[169] Cameron 1989c, 207. Cf. Febvre 1949, 428-30, [tr. 34-5]. See also, Haldon 2008a, 23-4.
[170] Cf. Certeau 1988a, 74-5, given that the work of a historian shapes tools, recipes, songs and popular imagery, for example, into documents.
[171] Cf. Cameron 1989a, 10, King 1989, 13, Nilsson 2006, 48-51.
[172] Cf. Herrin 1984, 167.
[173] Talbot 1994, 105-6.
[174] Talbot 1994, 105.
[175] Laiou 1985, 59.

chance references or informative side remarks regarding women.[176]

Hagiographies of female saints naturally give insights into female sanctity and are important sources for studies on women, but a hagiography of a male saint may also give interesting albeit indirect information in that it may well include stories about the saint's family, such as his mother and other female relatives, as well as female devotees and other female persons active around the subject of the narrative.[177] Even though these women frequently remain anonymous, information about them gives insights into both ideological views on and the practical aspects of women's lives. Given that so little documental material has survived, it is largely through indirect sources that a picture of the situation of women in the society is reconstructed. As always, one must remember that most of the sources, including female hagiographies, were produced by men and therefore transmit the male perspective on society.[178] What should also be kept in mind, as Hélène Saradi-Mendelovici notes, is that such narratives tend to focus on the unusual, instead of the regular aspects of life.[179] Further, there appears to be a lack of balance in the presentation of different social groups in that the texts tend to focus on a certain part of society, such as women on the highest social strata, especially the imperial family.[180]

In light of previous discussion above, any interpretation of a female presence in public space could and should rely on a variety of sources. Potential material includes not only literature (e.g. history, hagiography and poetry) but also visual art (e.g. mosaics, manuscript illustrations and coinage). While it is important to consult several sources to construct an appropriate picture, the above discussed connection which every source has with its context ensures that a selection of various sources provides a representative section of common attitudes and how society envisioned female participation in public space. An appropriate selection of sources may yield adequate information on how norms were conceived and how female behaviour was monitored through different media, showing what was envisioned as normal and exemplifying how divergence from norms was tackled or explained.

The sources chosen for this study represent a cross-section of different types of material. It is not a comprehensive study of all the material in any one available source group, neither are all possible sources from the period included: the material represents a broad selection of various types of sources that are relevant to the questions at hand.

Important normative sources covering the period are legal texts which largely consist of the two law codes compiled by Emperors Justinian I and Leo III. Known as *Codex Justinianus,* much of the previous Roman jurisprudence was collected and revised in an extensive law code commissioned and issued in Latin in 529-534. It included edicts by Justinian, a vast collection of old statutes with legislative commentaries by Roman jurists called the *Digesta*, and a summarising student textbook version named *Institutiones*. Justinian continued to issue new laws throughout his

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[176] Cf. Herrin 1984, 167, and Laiou 1985, 59-60.

[177] On the sub-division of Byzantine hagiographies into genre by gender, see Constantinou 2004, 414-20.

[178] Cf. Beaucamp 1992, 272, James 2009, 38. The *Life of St. Matrona of Perge* is a rare exception, as it might have been narrated by one of the nuns in her convent in Constantinople, Topping 1988, 212, 223.

[179] Saradi-Mendelovici 1991, 88.

[180] Cf. Herrin 1984, 168-9.

reign, called *Novellae*, which together with the original law code are now collected in what is usually called *Corpus Iuris Civilis* (CIC).[181] Although the Justinian law code incorporated and in many ways was a compilation of previous Roman jurisprudence, the texts were chosen for their relevance to the contemporary 6th-century society, and were also occasionally modified accordingly. New laws issued by Justin II, Justinian's immediate successor, have also survived, but thereafter follows a drop in the available material and the next major law compilation is the *Ecloga* from the mid-8th century, issued by Leo III and his son, the future Constantine V. This was a much more modest endeavour than Justinian's law code and could rather be seen as a condensed rendering and update in Greek of that previous work.[182] The *Novellae* of Leo VI (late 9th century) could be considered amendments to the previous corpus of juridical texts, reflecting the social and cultural changes of the previous centuries during which the Christian moral code and the influence of the Church in particular became more visible.[183] These collections of juridical texts are more or less the only secular normative material from the period. They provide a framework with regard to the position of women in society in that they represent official regulations and contemporary ideas voiced at the highest administrative level. This does not mean that the laws were always followed to the letter. As Beaucamp notes, they represent an ideal situation that does not always fully correspond to juridical praxis. They were known and followed to different degrees, blending with local customs and with variations in how certain laws were applied in a province such as Egypt, for example.[184] It should thus be kept in mind when one uses law texts that they are expressions of an ideal order of things presented by the ruling stratum. As such they give a good impression of the ideology of the imperial culture at the highest levels. This does not exclude them from exposing cultural praxis.[185] Evidence from the papyri shows that Early Byzantine legal practices continued in Egypt even after the Arab conquests of the 7th century.[186]

Another set of normative texts was produced by the Church.[187] Among those covering the period in question are the proceedings of the 5th (Constantinople II, 553), 6th (Constantinople III, 680-81) and 7th (Nicaea II, 787) Ecumenical Church Councils, as well as the so-called *quinisextum* or Council in Trullo (691-92).[188] The ecumenical councils primarily dealt with theological issues. The Council in Trullo is especially interesting, therefore, because it also dealt with day-to-day issues, regulating matters concerning the ecclesiastic personnel and the lay people in the congregation.[189]

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[181] See e.g. Arjava 1996, 9-10, Humfress 2005, 161-70. See Stolte 2009, 79, on the importance of Justinian's law codification. Cf. also Liebs 2000, 247-52. See Taubenschlag 1940-1, 280-95, on 6th-century papyri showing an influence from Justinian law texts.

[182] E.g. Mazal 1989, 142, Beaucamp 1990, 5, 7, Brubaker & Haldon 2001, 286-7, Stolte 2009, 79-80, and Brubaker & Haldon 2011, 78-9.

[183] Cf. Stolte 2009, 77-8, 84.

[184] Beaucamp 1992, 369-374, discusses the differences between jurisprudence and social praxis in sources from the 4th to the 6th centuries, and some possible explanations. Cf. Arjava 1996, 15-6, and Stolte 2009, 82-3.

[185] Cf. Stolte 2009, 83.

[186] Stolte 2002, 201-3.

[187] Cf. Stolte 2009, 78, 84.

[188] See e.g. Brubaker & Haldon 2001, 235-6, and Gallagher 2008, 586-8.

[189] Cf. Herrin 1992, 97-8.

There were also local church councils, whose decisions sometimes were acknowledged in other areas and therefore came to influence larger parts of Christianity than the local community. The teachings of church fathers and theologians could also be considered normative texts in that they are referred to in a didactic manner.[190] These sources reveal the ideological framework from a religious point of view. As Christianity was increasingly impregnating society and culture, they convey the ideological pressure put on female behaviour by leading religious establishments.

Few original archives from early Byzantium have survived. An exception is the chance survival of papyri, often in a fragmentary state. Most of these represent earlier centuries, and they declined in numbers from the 6th century onwards. As organic material, papyri are primarily preserved only in dry desert areas or in a carbonised state. Consequently, this source group originates mainly in Egypt. There is also some material from the Negev desert and a carbonised archive from Petra.[191] The non-literary papyri are valuable documents with a direct connection to actual transactions. Their frequently fragmentary condition and the fact that they tend to lack an exact context make them difficult to interpret. Monographs focusing on certain groups of papyri or certain themes are therefore valuable assets.[192] A few collections of letters have survived, such as those of Theophylact Simocatta from the early 7th century and Theodore of Stoudios from the turn of the 8th and 9th centuries. Theodore of Stoudios had extensive correspondence with several prominent women including Empress Irene, but most of the letters relate to social, political and spiritual matters and do not contain information that sheds light on how women related to public space.[193] Inscriptions are a typical source for ancient history, but they are becoming rare and, with a few exceptions such as some funerary inscriptions and those honouring the imperial couple or other nobility, seldom refer to the female part of society.[194]

A relevant selection is used from both the secular and religious normative sources. There is still a fair amount of papyri from the 6th century, including material related to women: some nine per cent of the entries on the prosopography of Byzantine Aphrodito, which is based on papyri, are women.[195] Given that papyri are a complex source material they are used selectively, based mainly on previous scholarly research.[196] There are few inscriptions of interest, which are used if they provide relevant information, or as illustrative examples. There are also a few pictorial portrayals of women. The main focus, however, is on literary sources, which include histories and chronicles, hagiographies, stories of miracles, scientific treaties and different types of poetry.

There is a consecutive series of histories and chronicles from the period.[197] Procopius provides an extensive account of the Justinian wars of the mid-6th century. He is famous for his

[190] One of the most productive theological writers during the period was John of Damascus († before 753), Mazal 1989, 113-4.
[191] See Kraemer 1958, and Frösén et al. (ed.) 2002.
[192] E.g. Taubenschlag 1940-1, Beaucamp 1993, Ruffini 2008, Ruffini 2011, Bagnall & Keenan & MacCoull 2011.
[193] E.g. Kazhdan 1999, 240-1, 244, 247-54.
[194] Cf. e.g. Sironen 1997, 31-4, 119-325, 376, and Kajava 2010, *passim*.
[195] Ruffini 2011, *passim*. Cf. also 6th-century tax register from Hermopolis, in which ca. 17% of the payments are made by women, Bagnall et al. 2011, 68-171.
[196] E.g. Beaucamp 1992, Ruffini 2008 and Ruffini 2011.
[197] See Angold & Withby 2008, 838-43, for an overview Byzantine historiography and its development.

notoriously controversial *Secret History* (*Anecdota*), which unlike his other work conveys a negative image of the imperial couple. Next is a short history in five books written by Agathias Scholasticus in the second half of the 6th century,[198] followed by Menander Protektor's and Theophylaktos Simokates' writings from the early 7th century.[199] The viewpoint of these four authors is that of the imperial capital, whereas a fifth, John Malalas, wrote his chronicle of the world in Antioch in the early 6th century.[200] All of them were close to the subject of their narrative, especially the parts on contemporary history, although they were dependent on previous writers for earlier accounts. In this latter sense Malalas is often considered the least reliable as an historian, but as a narrator on contemporary society and cultural attitudes he has value.[201] There is also the anonymous *Chronicon Paschale* from the 7th century.[202] The end of the period is represented by Patriarch Nikephoros' *Breviarium* (*Short history*), probably written in the last decades of the 8th century, and the world chronicle written by Theophanes the Confessor in the first decades of the 9th century. Roger Scott notes that Procopius, Agathias and Theophylaktos still wrote in the traditional manner of classical historiography, although the new influences that are visible in their work had started to change the genre, whereas Malalas marks a shift towards a new type of Christian world chronicle, with predecessors in the 4th century, Theophanes clearly also represents this, although traces of the classical tradition are visible.[203]

To some extent the motives of the authors of the earlier histories, who were in a relatively high social position, were to please the ruler, and none of them focus on the female side of society. The exception is Procopius who in his *Anecdota* also gives attention to Empress Theodora and her female circle.[204] The chronicles similarly concentrate on world events, but they include a range of anecdotes that give occasional glimpses of female attendance in public space.[205] The authors had experienced at least some of the historical events and were familiar with the cultural context. Their narrative contains sporadic passages expressing ideological views and giving insights into social

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[198] For a discussion on Procopius' *Secret History* see e.g. Kalldellis 2009 and Brubaker 2004a. On Procopius in general, see Cameron 1985 and Greatrex 1994. On Agathias, see Cameron 1970 and Withby 1992, 31-8. See Rapp 2005, 385-8 on both. See Scott 1985, *passim*, and Scott 2012b, 13-4, for insightful criticism of the *Secret History* and Malala's chronicle, showing how the same facts/incidents are turned into negative criticism of the emperor or a positive narrative influenced by imperial propaganda. On 6th-century sources see Cameron 2000b, 66-7.

[199] See E.g. Withby 1992, 38-53, for a short discussion. Withby & Whitbhy 1986, xiii, xvi-xvii.

[200] E.g. Croke 1990, *passim*, and Withby 1992, 59-62.

[201] E.g. Scott, 1985, 104, 106, Scott 2011, 83-5, and Scott 2012a, 1-5, 18-19, 21, 25.

[202] E.g. Withby 1992, 62-6, Scott 1990a, 38-9, and Withby & Withby 1986, xvi.

[203] Scott 1981, 67-9, 73-4. See also Scott 1990a, 38-42, Scott 1990b, 67-71, 82, Scott 2012b, 11-12. On Theophanes see Brubaker & Haldon 2001, 168-70. On Menander and Malalas see Rapp 2005, 391, 393-4. On Theophanes see Lilie 1996, 378-422. On Malalas and *Chronicon Paschale* see Whitby 2007, 285, 292, 303. On Malalas see Jeffreys 2006, 129, 133, Scott 1985, *passim*, Scott 2011, 83-5, and Scott 2012a, 1-5, 18-25. On Nikephoros and Theophanse see Kazhdan 1999, 211-34. On the decline of traditional historiography from the 7th century onwards, see Withby 1992, 66-74.

[204] Brubaker 2005, 429-36, compares Procopius' texts from the viewpoint of Theodora, noting that she is mentioned only eight times in the *Wars*, and only occasionally in *Buildings*, but frequently in the *Secret History*, in which she is used as the epiphany of an anti-woman.

[205] Cf. Scott 2011, 83-5. See Scott 2012b, 20-22, on trivia in the chronicles providing interesting material on contemporary society.

practices.

Only a few scientific texts have survived from this period, mostly from the 6th century, and most of them have even less to say on women than the history texts.[206] An exception is Aëtios of Amidas' book on medicine, the last part of which (Book XVI) is dedicated to female maladies and also gives some insights into the work of midwives. Other preserved medical treaties do not include such specific references to women.[207]

Hagiographies, miracle stories and religious *exempla* constitute an important source group for any study on social life in Byzantium. As Brubaker and Haldon note, hagiographies became a standard element in the reading lists of the pious in the early 7th century. Even the lives of purely fictional saints reveal a lot about society, religion, culture and so forth, and about the social and political history of the period.[208] Directly related to women and the period in question are the *vitae* of Mary of Egypt, St. Mary / Marinos and St. Matrona of Perge.[209] Although at least the first two probably relate to fictitious individuals, their narrative sprung from the environment of the 6th century, reflecting social circumstances relevant to this study. Their stories include the themes of the repentant harlot and cross-dressing holy women which were popular in the 6th and 7th centuries, and the *vitae* have novelistic traits.[210] The *Life of St. Matrona of Perge* (ca. 430-510/515), although related in part to events in the second half of the 5th century, was written down in the 6th century and the narration probably originated from one of the nuns in Matrona's own convent in Constantinople, making it a rare exception with its strong female perspective among the usual male-authored saints' lives.[211] *Vitae* of male saints from the 7th century that include interesting information on women are among others the *Life of Theodore of Sykeon* and the lives of Symeon the Fool and John the Almsgiver, both written by Leontios of Neapolis and placed in a clear urban setting.[212] Stephanos Efthymiadis agrees with some other scholars that Leontios' texts are good testimonies of early Byzantine daily life.[213] Compared to the relative abundance in earlier centuries, the 8th century

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[206] Examples of texts of a geographical nature include Cosmas Indicopleustes' *Christian Topography* (mid-6th century) and Stephen of Byzantium's geographical dictionary *Ethnica* (6th century). Administrative treaties include Hierocles' *Synekdemos* (6th century) and John Lydus' *De Magistratibus* and *De Mensibus* (6th century). Didymos' *Geoponica* (5th - 6th centuries) is an agricultural treatise.

[207] E.g. Alexander of Tralles (6th century), Palladius (6th or 7th century), Paul of Aegina (7th century), and Theophilus Protospatharius (7th century).

[208] Brubaker & Haldon 2001, 201-3. For hagiographic material of the 4th - 10th centuries, see e.g. Efthymiadis et al. 2011, *passim*, Efthymiadis 2011, *passim,* and Flusin, 2011*, passim.* Cf. Talbot 2008, 862-6, for the literary context, background and development of hagiographies.

[209] On the *vita* of Mary of Egypt, see e.g. Flusin 2011, 212

[210] Efthymiadis et al. 2011, 66-7, 77-8.

[211] Topping 1988, 212-3, 223, and Efthymiadis et al. 2011, 62-3. See also Brubaker & Haldon 2001, 252-3, and Kazhdan 1999, 25, 152. See Constantinou 2004, 414-20, on the differences between male and female hagiographies and gendered differences in sainthood.

[212] Efthymiadis et al. 2011, 71-6, Kazhdan 1999, 23, and Krueger 1996, 4-10. Cf. Mango 1981a, 51-3, on 'low level' saints' lives, seeing them as qualified to reveal everyday practices and ordinary life particularly in areas outside Constantinople, also giving examples of how they reflect cultural innovations and customs, not always documented in 'high' literature. See also Rapp 1995, *passim*. van Ginkel 2002, 229-34, 237-8, on Theodore of Sykeon and John the Almsgiver and their relationship with society and the imperial authorities. See Bloch 1949, 25 [tr. 52-3] on the value of saints' lives to the history of everyday life. Certeau 1988a, 269-83 discusses hagiographies.

[213] Efthymiadis et al. 2011, 76. Krueger 1996, 7, 10, notes that, although the story of Symeon the Fool is fictitious

represents a low point with almost no preserved hagiographies.[214] There are some example from the turn of the 8th and 9th centuries, such as the lives of St. Stephen the Younger and of St. Philaretos the Merciful.[215] One of several anonymous *iconodule* hagiographies from the 9th century is the *Vita of three brothers from Mytilene, David, Symeon, and George*, which refers back to the 8th century.[216] Related to the hagiographies are texts such as *Miraculi St. Demetrii* describing events in Thessaloniki during the 7th century, and *Miraculi St. Artemii,* also from the 7th century, with stories from a healing sanctuary in Constantinople.[217] Cyril of Scythopolis' *Lives of the Monks of Palestine* and John Moschos' *Pratum spirituale*, are collections of moral stories on pious life in the 6th and early 7th centuries, the second in particular containing some interesting stories that include aspects of the lives of women.[218]

There is a relative abundance of hagiographies and miracle stories from Eastern Mediterranean Christianity, but common problems include frequent author anonymity and uncertainty about the date of their composition and other contextual circumstances, making it difficult to associate them with a specific chronological and social environment. A further frequent problem from a research perspective is the lack of modern editions. The texts chosen for this study have been subjected to modern scholarly research. They are also dated with some accuracy to the relevant centuries, either through an attributed author or manuscript tradition, or because other facts determine the date of composition with relatively good approximation. Further, the texts on historical persons were written in relative proximity to the lives or events they relate. Their main value, however, is in how they reflect social and cultural attitudes and practices.

Poetry is an entirely different kind of source material. Very little secular poetry has survived, but it is interesting for comparative purposes. Agathias Scholasticus wrote and collected poems in his *Cycle (Kyklos)* in the second half of the 6th century, most of which survive in *Anthologia Graeca*. That century represented a last peak for poetry written according to a purely classical tradition. The other authors in Agathias' collection are his contemporaries, peers and friends, representing the educated class of the bureaucracy in Constantinople. Agathias was influenced by earlier poetic collections, which seem to have been popular and in circulation in mid-6th-century Constantinople.[219] Other surviving works of interest in *Anthologia Graeca* include some dedicatory poems, which relate to church building and restoration work commissioned by empresses or

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with regard to the original Symeon, the text reveals a lot about the society in which it was written.

[214] Efthymiadis et al. 2011, 79.

[215] See Auzépy 1999, *passim*, for a discussion of the life of St. Stephen the younger, which was written in 807 or 809 by a deacon also named Stephen. On both see e.g. Brubaker & Haldon 2001, 225-7, Brubaker & Haldon 2011, 577, 646-8, Efthymiadis 2011, 100, 107-8, and Kazhdan 1999, 183-98, 281-91.

[216] Kazhdan 1999, 198-203.

[217] Efthymiadis et al. 2011, 66-7, Lemerle 1981,27-8, 32, 44-6 79-80, 83-5, 171-3, Crisafulli & Nesbitt 1997, 6-9, 27, Kazhdan 1999, 23-4, 27-35, 149, Haldon 1997, 34, and Cameron 1992, 101-2. Cf. Haldon 2007, 263-5, on miracle collections of the 7th and 8th centuries.

[218] *Pratum spirituale* was a popular text in the 7th century, but was therefore also vulnerable to revisions, see e.g. Brubaker & Haldon 2011, 200. Cf. Cameron 1992, 91-2. On both texts see Flusin 2011, 208-10, 213.

[219] On compilation and dating, see Cameron Al. 1994, *passim*, and Cameron & Cameron 1966, *passim*, on dating the *Kyklos* ca. 566-8. See also Cameron 1970, 7-9,12-29, and Cameron Al. 1993, 16, 46-8, 70-5. Cf. Rapp 2005, 387-90. See Lauxtermann 2003, 39, 47, 75, 83-94, 131-8, also on poetry as a pastime activity among the elite.

highborn ladies such as Anicia Juliana. A few longer panegyrics have also survived, most of them the work of two authors. There are two poems from the 6th century written by Flavius Cresconius Corippus, who originated from the African province. One is *Iohannis* on the wars in Libya during Justinian's reign and the other is *In laudem Iustini Augusti minoris* which relates the death of that emperor and the accession to the throne of his nephew Justin II with his wife Sophia. The latter is of interest in that the narrative context is Constantinople and the Empress is given prominent treatment alongside the Emperor. Corippus wrote his poems in Latin, which reflects the multi-ethnic and multi-lingual culture of the 6th century in which Latin still was in used in Constantinople.[220] The 7th-century writer George Pisida was more productive, and more texts have survived, but they are mainly concerned with military events during Emperor Heraclius' reign or with theological subjects.[221] There is also a relative plenitude of religious hymns, especially from the hand of Romanos Melodus, whom scholars date to either the 6th or the 8th century. Although some of these texts may give insights into theological and religious views on Biblical women, especially the Virgin Mary, they are not used here because they are not relevant to questions of public space.[222]

Although limited in number, there are pictorial sources of interest from the Early Byzantine centuries. At least eleven illuminated manuscripts from the late 5th and the 6th centuries survive.[223] Of particular significance are the illustrations in the so-called *Wiener Genesis* from the early 6th century.[224] They illustrate Biblical stories, but the depicted personae are *de facto* portrayed in contemporary Byzantine clothing and settings, and there are several women among them. A manuscript commissioned by Anicia Juliana that contains a depiction of her is also of interest.[225] These manuscripts give a rare insight into the visual conception of early Byzantine society.

Another valuable pictorial source comprises surviving mosaics, especially from 6th-century Ravenna.[226] The wall mosaics in the church of St. Demetrios in Thessaloniki are from the same era, but those including female figures are now preserved only in drawings from the early 20th century.[227] Archaeological excavations occasionally yield floor mosaics, but only a few are of interest here. One 6th-century mosaic from Antioch does have a border depicting city streets and buildings.[228] These sources provide illustrative material that can be compared with the textual narrative. Likewise

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[220] Croke 2005, 74-6. See also Cameron 1976, *passim*.

[221] George of Pisida's best known and most copied work was a didactic poem called *Hexameron or Cosmologia* (also called *Opus sex dierum seu Mundi opificium*, on the creation of the world). On his extant and lost texts, see Pertusi 1959/1960, 15-37, and Lauxtermann 2003, 38-40, 57-8, 65-6, 131-2, 180-1, 330-2, 334-7.

[222] On women in hymnography see e.g. Leena Mari Peltoma's treatise on the *Akathistos* hymn, Peltomaa 2001, *passim*, and the hymn 'On the Sinful Woman' by Romanos, Peltomaa 2005, 34-44.

[223] These are the *Wiener Genesis*, the *Cotton Genesis*, the *Rossano Gospel*, the *Sinope Gospel* fragments, the *Rabbula Gospel*, *the St. Augustine Gospel*, the *Ashburnham Pentateuch*, two Virgil manuscripts, the Milan *Illiad*, and Anicia Juliana's codex of Dioscurides' *De Materia Medica*, see e.g. Cormack 2000c, 887-8.

[224] The *Cod.Vindob.Theol.Graec.* 31. Gerstinger 1931contains a study and a facsimile version.

[225] The *Cod.Vindob.Med.Gr. 1.* Discussed in Gerstinger 1926.

[226] On Ravenna, see von Simson 1948, Deichmann 1958, Deichmann 1969, Deichmann 1974, Deichmann 1976, and Deichmann 1989. For comments on San Vitale in Ravenna, see e.g. Andreescu-Treadgold & Treadgold 1997, *passim*, and Cormack 2000c, 891, 906-9.

[227] Cormack 1969, *passim*, and Brubaker 2004b, 63-79.

[228] Levi 1947, vol. II, plates LXXVI-LXXXII.

of interest is the iconography of some of the imperial coinage issued during the period. Pieces of minor art such as ivory diptychs and other objects, some silver plates with relief imagery and ceremonial crosses provide additional information.[229]

Although most of the artwork from Early Byzantine society has not survived, there are a few texts describing some of the now lost works of art. Such *ekphrasis* can also provide information. Procopius of Gaza wrote about a wall painting with mythological motifs.[230] Paulos Silentiarios' poem on Hagia Sophia concentrates on the architecture, but also includes some other facts.[231] Christodorus' late-5th-century poetic description of the statues in the Zeuxippos baths in Constantinople, which were later destroyed, is also of interest. It is included in *Anthologia Graeca*.[232] *Parastaseis syntomoi chronikai*, an anonymous treaty from the late-8th- or early-9th-century, lists and comments on statues in public space in Constantinople.[233] Occasional notes on lost images are also found in other sources, such as in Procopius' book on Justinian's building activities.

The following criteria regulated the choice of source material: it was dated to the relevant period; it was available through publication; it contained information on women in the society; and it represented various source types offering different insights into the relevant questions.

There is, admittedly, some asymmetry in the material. More sources are available for the 6th century than for the so-called 'Dark Age' which affected the following period, having the consequence of a scarcer material for the 7th and especially the 8th century. Hagiographies and other religious material ease the situation to some extent. The diversity among the chosen sources helps to ensure a variety of perspectives on ideology and praxis in society.

Having considered the available sources, the following question is how to approach them. Most have been scrutinised for publication, translation or specific studies by scholars specialised in the field, so the basic questions of source criticism are addressed in the majority of cases. I rely largely on their work in these matters. Critical assessment is added when there is a reason for it. The focus is on how to extract, through critical reading, meaningful information from the source material and how to assess it.

Sister Charles Murray discusses the possibility of extracting helpful accidental exposés from a text in an article on early Christian theological texts:

> sometimes, by focussing on for example 'unintentional data', pieces of evidence not directly related to the author's main intention in writing, they may reveal authentic and hitherto under emphasised levels of concern in the text.

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[229] Ivory objects e.g. Volbach 1976. Silver plates e.g. Mango 1986, and Zalesskaya 2004, 293-7, with figures of silver plates from the 6th - 7th centuries. On ecclesiastic gold and silver art objects, see e.g. Cormack 2000c, 900-1.
[230] Friedländer 1939, *passim*.
[231] Paulos Silentiarios, *Ekphrasis*.
[232] *Anth. Gr.,* II *passim*.
[233] Cameron & Herrin 1984, *passim*, Brubaker & Haldon 2001, 75, 301, Brubaker & Haldon 2011, 144. See Berger 2013, ix-xii, on its incorporation into the *Patria*. Kazhdan 1999, 208-13, interpret it as parody to some extent.

At the same time, however, Sister Murray warns about the risks and limitations of such usage.[234] Be that as it may, this is often the only kind of information on women in Byzantine society that is available. Most texts are relatively male-centred, and the inclusion of women tends to be a biproduct supporting the main narrative or issues in question. Side remarks diverting from the main storyline provide useful substance in the pursuit of evidence about everyday life, as these are instances when the author might provide a glimpse beyond the otherwise occurring omission of the obvious or the usual. One might also assume that secondary narratives such as these are not as strongly coloured by the author's bias to force an issue connected to the main topic, and that they inadvertently give insights into common ideological, social or cultural conditions. According to Lynda Garland, however, Byzantine historians seldom give a historically accurate picture of things concerning women, being more concerned with conventional ideology. H.-N. Angelomatis-Tsougarakis agrees as she underlines the ideological aspect of Byzantine literature presenting the model to which the ideal daughter, wife and mother should conform. Such considerations need not diminish the usefulness of the sources as reflectors of the reality. Gerhard Jaritz discusses what he calls 'real fiction' or 'fictional reality' in historical accounts, and their value in the study of praxis and everyday experiences.[235] Hagiographies are a good example of texts that provide this kind of unintentional data. Although the main focus is on the saint and they contain apocryphal elements, the surrounding society is described as interacting with the main character, and herein lie the grains of informative knowledge.

Despite occasional descriptions of the habitual, the narratives tend to focus on the unusual or the singular. As Helen King remarks, "any description involves selection" and the obvious, from the viewpoint of contemporary society, may well be ignored and is seldom clearly stated.[236] She puts this forward as one reason why the practical side of life is more obscure and harder to pursue in the prevailing sources. Some literary theoreticians point out that attention has to be given to what is absent - signs of 'internal rupture' as Pierre Macherey puts it. He would ask: "In what relation to that which is other than itself is the work produced?" What is left out, not making it "a coherent and unified whole"?[237] Not only might the obvious be left out, given that the audience is presumably familiar with the common and the usual, one also has to consider the absence of that which is not approved or allowed to be spoken of. There is therefore good reason to consider possible deliberate omissions from a text.

One aspect that is distinctive not only of Byzantine material is the occasional discrepancy in attitudes to women in various sources.[238] Early Byzantine love poems may give a relatively liberal image whereas misogynous attitudes may prevail in other literature, and the law code may give yet another picture. Some scholars prefer a neat picture and see discrepancies as problematic, creating contradictions instead of a coherent image. In my view this is not a particular problem. Any society,

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[234] Murray 1989, 178. Cf. Bloch 1949, 23-5 [tr. 50-2], who discusses sources originally unintended to be evaluated by strange eyes and "evidence of witnesses in spite of themselves".
[235] Garland 1988, 389-90, Angelomatis-Tsougarakis 1982, 477, and Jaritz 1997, 16.
[236] King 1989, 29. Cf. Saradi-Mendelovici 1991, 88.
[237] Clark 2004, 61, Macherey 1978, 85-9, 154-6.
[238] Cf. e.g. Cameron's introduction in Wyke 1989, 111-2.

one's own included, incorporates a variety of attitudes related to all its aspects not only women, depending on the exposition, the person giving it and its purpose. Similar incongruities would be found in modern texts if they were scrutinised in the same way as ancient sources. Each source, therefore, must be assessed individually, based on who is giving the evaluation and why. One aspect to consider is the degree to which statements reflect handed-down traditional explanations and ways of displaying the female, and how much they reflect values arising from the contemporary situation. My view is that traditional values and models are invoked only to the extent that they still somehow reflect contemporary positions, at least of the social group expressing them. Inconsistencies reflect differences in social level, normative attitudes, individual opinions and praxis, for example. Discrepancy is part of any social reality.[239] No society is totally coherent, especially in their attitudes towards women. One reason for this is that women do not constitute a coherent and homogeneous group, even if they are often conceived of as such. Once the prevalent discourse of the feminine has been identified, against which female presence in public space can be evaluated, discrepancies can be examined to uncover factors that affected variations such as the social position of the women in question or of those doing the assessment.

Most pre-modern sources reflect the particular and do not provide data for quantitative analysis, which leaves open the question of how typical individual communications are of the society as a whole. One has to determine if a particular extract merely attests individual opinions or a singular event, or if it reflects collective ideology or common practice. A crucial tool is to be found in traditional historical methods and source criticism: if several independent sources indicate similar effects it is safer to make general assumptions.[240] Although one source alone cannot paint a convincing picture of female presence in public space, combined evidence from various sources gives a more secure image. Complementing text evidence with visual material may help to confirm common rhetoric. Several of the mosaics in Ravenna, for example, yield interesting complementary evidence on questions to do with women in power and their possible influence on and presence in public space, as well as with public aesthetic representations of the feminine.[241]

Judith Herrin suggests three approaches to studying the reality of women in Byzantine society, in her case the 7th to the 12th centuries: "to pick up chance references to female activity in the sources written by men"; to examine "the case law that survives"; and to research institutions in which women have been active, in her case ecclesiastic institutions and convents.[242] Some of these are also applicable to the 6th to the 8th centuries, although female institutions cannot be studied in the same direct manner through *typika* as they can for later periods, for example. Concurring with

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[239] Cf. Geertz 1973, 203-4, and Geertz 1983, 222-4, on 'normal' and 'abnormal' discourses.

[240] For a general survey of source criticism, see e.g. Howell & Prevenier 2001, 43-7.

[241] Cf. Gerstel 1988, 89, 95, who uses Late Byzantine monumental decoration to study the devotional practices of women. She also refers to scholars of western medieval art who urge caution in using manuscripts and monumental programs that include portraits of female saints to draw conclusions about female piety and female space, although she is more confident of such use regarding Byzantine material. See Cameron 2006b, 21-2, on different source types giving complementary views, e.g. imperial panegyric and ivory carvings.

[242] Herrin 1984, 167-8. NB, scholars such as Herrin, Laiou and others writing in the 1980s, do not consider it problematic to speak about a historical reality recreated from the sources, whereas contemporary theory, as discussed above, is more cautious and instead considers plausible interpretations of the past.

other scholars, Herrin admits that the law code represents the legal ideal, but not necessarily the reality. This is equally true of canonical rules and moral advice. As Helen Saradi-Mendelovici observes, notary documents represent the real situation, whereas legislation tends, as time elapses, to include old concepts that may eventually become outdated and obsolete, and literary narrative tends to describe unusual or isolated events.[243] According to Angeliki Laiou, "for the most part, the sources present model views of female behaviour, and it is only indirectly that the face of reality may be uncovered."[244] Her concern is mainly with the 11th to the 15th centuries, a period still with relatively few 'documental' sources.

Although there are sources that reveal some sort of reality among women in society, many more seem to focus on ideal situations or ideological views, the practical side of life sometimes being harder to track. Even so, Laiou remarks in a later article that these two levels have to be pursued, in other words to reveal both the supposed reality of the role played by women in society and the role ideology played in their lives.[245]

Various source types have different 'reality value', but a single source may contain assorted reports on a scale from actuality to ideology. A real situation is distinguishable in a transaction preserved on a papyrus fragment, representing a documental source. A law text or a church canon, on the other hand, is likely to convey the ideology of the institution issuing it. This is not to say that a transaction cannot also convey ideological aspects, the customs prevailing in the society or ideas about the nature of things, or that a law text cannot include information about societal practices. Decrees issued by emperors, for example, sometimes include background information on some special case coming to the attention of the ruler, which then functioned as an instigating factor for the decree. Levels of ideology and praxis therefore have to be evaluated in each individual case, based on inter-textual and contextual appraisal.[246]

For any type of source one has to recognise the above-mentioned condition that it conveys the observed reality as interpreted by its creator and not reality.[247] Therefore even sources traditionally categorised as documents are texts that represent a processed and reworked reality.[248] Not even first-hand reports present reality accurately, but they "re-present" it, as interpreted by the writer.[249] This does not undermine their value, but it does accentuate the point that evidence from several different sources helps to give a more varied and distinct picture.

Narrative texts, in turn, tend to focus not only on the unusual or the ideal, they may also

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[243] Saradi-Mendelovici 1991, 88.

[244] Laiou 1981, 243.

[245] Laiou 1985, 59.

[246] Cf. the discussion in Beaucamp 1992, 271.

[247] Cf. e.g. King 1989, 21, referring to ideas in Foucault's book *The Order of Things*: "all sources are equally 'representations'; action, text, speech: observed, read, heard" and each is "a veil between the observer and 'reality'; there is no such thing as direct, common sense access to 'reality'".

[248] Clark 2004, 127, referring to Dominick LaCapra's critical view on the traditional approach of many professional historians giving supremacy to documents, reading them as "simply sources of information" and not recognising them as literary works requiring a critical reading. According to LaCapra, the claim that documents give access to 'the real', unlike other more literary texts, is not valid. Historians all work with texts, different sorts of texts to be sure, but they are all 'texts' and should be treated as such, LaCapra 1985, 17-20, 38.

[249] King 1989, 21.

include purely fictional material. 'Facts', of course, have to be separated from 'fiction' in attempts to evaluate what is invention and what reflects some sort of reality, but even fictional elements may convey actualities. In other words, one might ask to what degree a literary text can be total fiction and to what degree it has to be based on some factual aspects of society so as to be credible or acceptable to contemporary readers. The difficulty for a modern scholar is to judge if and how well different aspects of a text reflect social realities despite its fictional features.[250] The purpose and nature of a source plays a role in this. A text produced entirely for diversion and entertainment may well indulge in pure fantasy, whereas most other treatises, if they are to seem convincing to the audience, have, more or less, to keep to accepted views of what at least plausibly could occur. Whereas texts such as miracle stories may include elements of the fantastic or have supernatural features that are not easily digestible for a modern reader, even these narrations tend to use familiar elements and thus to keep the framework within the boundaries of the probable or at least the possible, as conceived by contemporary society, even when factual events are not related. In this way, texts that could be characterised as fantasy also correspond to the society in which they were written.

Using hagiographies as sources inevitably involves an element of the miraculous, and for various reasons, some purely fictional hagiographies were also created. Although the full narrative cannot always be taken at face value, elements portraying society could still be considered descriptive of what was considered possible or plausible in terms of praxis: situating miraculous stories in a recognisable social setting adds credibility as far as the audience is concerned. Similarly, the religious *exempla* narrated by John Moschos and Cyril of Scythopolis, although emphasising moral lessons still recreated a social setting that their contemporaries would have recognised. These are the aspects of religious texts that serve a useful purpose in the search for answers to questions that are relevant to the present study.

The agenda of the author, including the envisioned audience, has to be considered in the evaluation of literary sources because it affects the rhetorical discourse and the 'truth value', or 'objectivity', of the material.[251] Modern theory emphasises the need to consider the audience (who they were and what they expect to hear, see or read) as well as the author, and to assess the relationship between text and reader. As Clark notes, the intention of the author, even if it can be inferred from the text, does not necessarily coincide with or convey the meaning the reader reads into it.[252] Furthermore, modern historians do not necessarily read ancient texts in the same way as contemporaries did. A critical reading of the sources should therefore consider not only the author and his (or her) intent, but also how readers at the time might have understood the source material, as well as the social and cultural context in which it was produced. Traditions and social needs influenced and affected the shaping of both the form and the content of a text and any other source

[250] Cf. Messis 2006, 117: many historiographic texts reflect the contemporary society of the author rather than accurately describing historical events or earlier perceptions of myths. He gives as an example the way Malalas in the 6th century described the mythical adulterous adventures of Aphrodite.
[251] Cf. Cameron 1989, 6-7.
[252] Clark 2004, 8. Cf. Barthes 1977, 142-8, and Certeau 1988b, 169-70.

material.[253]

The relationship between the producer of a source and the surrounding society should therefore be considered. Clark refers to Putnam's notion of "a community of users who share a conceptual scheme that governs how signs apply". If there is agreement on a certain descriptive scheme, things can be paired in that both objects and signs are internal to this scheme.[254] For example, when a hagiography mentions an inn the word in itself is a sign or a short cut to describing a certain type of milieu. The contemporary reader can then conjure up a mental picture of the physical analogy as well as a whole range of ready cultural associations that are attached to it, such as moral appraisals and what type of people usually frequent or should not frequent such a place.

In a similar way, Clifford Geertz understands texts as being rooted in everyday realities. Symbols and language relate not only to other texts but also to an experienced 'real' world. It is society that gives life to signs, symbols and texts, therefore there is an inter-relationship between society and its texts that can be studied. As for what serves as 'text', he takes an anthropological perspective according to which everything from rituals, palaces, technologies, arguments, melodies, formulas, maps and pictures to social formation are not idealities but 'texts' to be read. They can all be used to interpret practices, actions and rituals in the 'real' world. Geertz refers to an interpretative mode characterised by 'thick description', indicating that cultures are systems made up of such 'texts', which in themselves are clusters or assemblies. He also points to the relevance of the 'hermeneutic circle' in any rendition of a society, in which the whole has to be understood through its parts and the parts through their position in the context of the whole.[255] The close link between text, context and culture, therefore, makes it possible to study the ideology and praxis of an ancient society through a varied selection of remnant traces.

With regard to the relationship between text and context, it should also be borne in mind that although historical research tends to imagine contexts as something independent of the written remains, even that which is considered extra-textual context is, in the end, constructed mainly from textual or material remains, and therefore represents a sort of interpretation in itself. Hence, something "that serves as text in one account might serve as context in another".[256]

Furthermore, texts are not created in a contemporary vacuum, but stand in relationship to previous material in which new things are created from old and old material can be given new meaning.[257] This is related to the reception of a text: when older material is employed or serves to

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[253] Cf. Murray 1989, 175, on e.g. sociology's influence on interpretations of the New Testament and its texts. See also the discussion in Chapter I.B, 7-14.

[254] Clark 2004, 39. Clark sees that Putman parallels "Wittgensteins's notion that practice fixes interpretation and that public norms constituting a "form of life" are necessary for language and thought". Putnam 1981, 52, 67-9, 106-8, 117-9, 201-2.

[255] Geertz 1973, 3-30, Geertz 1980, 103-4, 122-5, 135-6, Geertz 1983, 30-3, 58-9, 69-70. 96-106, 118-20, 124, 182, 217, and Clark 2004, 145-8. For criticism of the use of 'thick description', see LaCapra 1985, 18.

[256] Clark 2004, 284 note 1. Cf. LaCapra 1985, 36, 42-3.

[257] Clark 2004, 132, referring to Gérard Genette's approach defined as 'open structuralism': the focus is not on the internal relations of a 'closed text' (as in early structuralism), but on the relationship of texts with each other. Genette also discusses how older writings are launched "into new circuits of meaning" and the making of "new things out of old". Genette 1997, 1-10, 395-6, 398-400. Cf. Barthes 1977, 146, who states: "a text is /—/ a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the

influence one has to distinguish between the *context of production* and the *context of consumption*. In other words, the meanings the producer puts into a text or an object are dependent on his or her cultural and social context, whereas the meanings and associations later users draw from it depend on their own education, experience and other background factors, presenting a different context, that of consumption.[258] The way symbols, or *topoi,* and other material borrowed from literary tradition were understood depended strongly on the receiving end, which was coloured by contemporary cultural biases. Old literary *topoi* should therefore be understood in the context in which they were used and not necessarily in that of their origin.[259] As Helen King, discussing interpretations of the meaning of a source, maintains, "the search for an ultimate, 'correct', true meaning is futile: there is no one 'meaning of', but rather, /—/ there are many 'meanings for' ".[260] The poets in Agathias' collection, for example, do not necessarily give the same meaning to old literary *topoi* as writers and readers did in ancient times. Similarly, Malalas bases his interpretation of ancient mythology in his chronicle on his own Christian cultural context, and not in the same way as a person six hundred years earlier would have done.

The prevalent use of ancient tradition in texts and other cultural output as well as the frequent use of *topoi* are significant features of Byzantine sources in particular. Byzantine society drew heavily on its heritage in antiquity and proudly presented itself as its heir and successor, sometimes to such a degree that the Byzantine culture might occasionally be seen, at first glance, as only a late, somewhat stagnated and inferior imitation of antiquity. However, this would be to underestimate the creativity and independence of Byzantine society and its culture, which although exploiting its ancient heritage, changed it for its own purposes, often by means of unique interpretations that suited contemporary needs. The classical tradition was influential in the education of the cultural elite, in the same way as Shakespeare is part of an English-speaking culture, and the Kalevala as well as Runeberg's poems are part of Finnish society.[261] No one would claim that texts by modern authors containing references to this older material were only literary exercises detached from the surrounding society with no significance in terms of understanding contemporary culture. The classical tradition was similarly made part of Byzantine culture. Joëlle Beaucamp, for example, correctly notes that every source is related both to a textual tradition and an exterior reality.[262]

As Angeliki Laiou observes with regard to *topoi* and stereotypes, "the *topos*, however, while distorting reality, does not entirely falsify it".[263] In other words, a *topos*, although stereotypical and

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innumerable centres of culture."

[258] Cranny-Francis et al., 2003, 90.

[259] Cf. Cameron's introduction to Wheeler 1989, 34, noting that modern theory allows for the appreciation of ancient writers' reliance on rhetorical tricks and older material as a creative use of tradition ("creative memory") instead of only a "schematic search for model and genre". Such use involves not only "a sterile copying of worn-out *topoi*, but a creative and continuous engagement with the past and with tradition". See also, Kazhdan 1999, 400.

[260] King 1989, 21, referring to anthropologist Gilbert Lewis' studies of the 'meaning' of particular ritual practices. Lewis 1980, specifically 218-23, but also 19, 34-8, 117-20, 132-4, 144-6.

[261] Cf. Mango 1981a, 50-1, who nevertheless considers the influence of the Byzantine elite on common life marginal.

[262] Beaucamp 1992, 271, 272, 295. Cf. Lauxtermann 2003, 131-2, who still professes the traditional view that the type of epigrams collected by Agathias in his *Cyclos* are pure fantasy, literary pastime exercises of an elite, which have nothing to do with real life. I strongly disagree with this view.

[263] Laiou 1981, 244.

therefore possibly not, in the strictest sense, mirroring actuality, in most cases echoes possible or probable eventualities in the guise of a familiar and easily recognisable literary format. *Topoi*, generalisations and simplifications, which are common in Byzantine sources, should therefore not be discarded because they do reflect some aspects of both ideology and praxis. Material continues to be used only as long as it has some meaning, or a relevant meaning can be read into it to suit a contemporary situation. Once a *topos* has lost its relevance it usually ceases to be useful.

Poetry in particular depended on the classical tradition, often modelled on ancient prototypes and the use of the customary *topoi*. There is a need for some caution, therefore, when poetry is used as a source. Attempting to read contemporary realities in poetry is not altogether unproblematic. Maria Wyke, for example, criticises attempts to see real women behind the portraits of women in Roman elegies.[264] Although I agree with her that women portrayed in poetry may be fictional and without a historical counterpart in the author's contemporary society, I still claim that authors have to stay within certain boundaries of credibility, plausibility and acceptability that are relevant to their own social and cultural contexts, even when the unusual, the imaginary, or the unfamiliar is evoked. Women in poetry may not represent particular historical individuals, but they may still have the traits of women who are contemporary with the author or reflect compiled attitudes towards contemporary women. In my opinion, the discussion concerns the ways in which such imaginary representations reflect society. Despite the fictional elements, poetry, like other sources, is connected to the surrounding society and reflects contemporary attitudes as well as the boundaries of possible social practice. Byzantine poetry, although written by people educated in the classical tradition and tending to imitate earlier styles, evidently adapted to changes in society in terms of attitudes and morals.[265] Christian names occur alongside classical names, for example.[266] At least once a clergyman is mentioned,[267] and the few times homosexual love is even touched upon in a poem it is dismissed as unacceptable and is totally condemned.[268] The poems of Agathias and his

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[264] E.g. Wyke 1989, 113-5, 117. Wyke introduces the term 'The Elegic Woman' to designate the literary image of women created in the Augustan elegy: her purpose was to avoid confusing them with real women, seeing them as a concept in the tradition of erotic poetry that separated poetic imagery from historical individuals.

[265] Some scholars still hold the view that erotic poems in *Anthologia Graeca* represent the 'classicizing' tradition and consider them as having been of interest manly to a narrow intellectual circle, cf. Messis 2006, 304-5, and Lauxtermann 2003, 39, 132. I believe this is a somewhat limited and outdated interpretation. Although written in a classical style and by an educated elite, such poems adapted to contemporary ideology and the erotic reality in society, as prostitution continued to flourish. See McCail 1971, *passim*, on Agathias' erotic poetry. See also, 44.

[266] E.g. three poems on women called Maria (*Anth. Gr.* V:298 by Julianus the Egyptian, 6th century; VII:557 by Cyrus the Poet, 5th or 6th century; XVI:278 by Paulos Silentiarios, 6th century). *Anth. Gr.* XVI:77 & 78 by Paulos Silentiarios) on a girl named Theodora, which although of Greek origin clearly was a name of the 6th century XVI:80 by Agathias on a painting by Thomas (according to Cameron & Cameron 1997 not necessarily painter, but a commissioner).

[267] *Anth. Gr.* V:286 by Paulos Silentiarios.

[268] Condemning homosexual love, e.g. *Anth. Gr.* V:277 by Eratosthenes Scholasticus (6th century), and V:278, V:302, X:68 by Agathias Scholasticus (6th century). Many poems in Agathias' *Kyklos* show traces of moral attitudes in line with contemporary Christian ethics. Cf. Justinian legislation, which specified severe punishments for homosexuality, *Nov*. 77 (AD 535 ?) & *Nov.* 141 (AD 559), and narratives about such punishments, e.g. in Malalas, *Chron.* 18.18 [436] and Procopius, *Anecd.* 11.34-36, showing that poetry reflects contemporary sentiments. The strictness continues in 8th-century law, *Ecloga*, 8.11, and 17.38. Accordingly, accusations of homosexuality were used in a hostile way, as in the *Life of St. Stephen the Younger,* ch. 37 & 65 (ed. Auzérpy, p. 232 n. 249, p. 265 n. 413), in which iconoclast Emperor

colleagues include elements taken from the authors' experiences, particularly of life in Constantinople. It would seem, therefore, that poems mentioning women reflect contemporary attitudes and may well describe possible situations, even if they do not necessarily describe real events or historical persons.[269]

The different characteristics and particularities of various sources must be recognised. Church canons present things from a Christian moral perspective, whereas civil law represents the secular state's point of view, although the influence of Christian morality and the Church in a Christian society should be kept in mind. Many hagiographies convey circumstances from lower levels of society, also occasionally giving glimpses of rural life but not excluding aristocratic life. Historiography tends to reflect the higher strata of society and to concentrate on urban settings, and their producers tend to belong to the intellectual elite. These are, of course, generalisations and there are exceptions. Some chronicles are provincial in origin, or more 'low brow' in nature. Whereas hagiography dwells on Christian morality and ideals, poems reveal secular aspects and attitudes of society. Laws and Church canons are intended to unify society. Historical texts tend to convey the common ideology of a high culture, whereas papyri may reveal local aspects. Stemming from different sub-contexts, the sources help in various ways to produce a picture of the ideological framework affecting people in society, including women.[270] Similarly they convey different aspects of social practices.

In sum, the interpretation of the source material that is available from the Early Byzantine period should proceed according to the following principles. Traditional historical methods of source criticism have to be followed. Beyond that, an interpretative reading of the material, in relation to both its context and its inner meaning is required. The above-mentioned close link between text, context and culture makes it possible to investigate the ideology and behaviour of an ancient society through a broad variety of remnant traces. Various types of sources are required to create a broad picture. Through comparison of not only several sources but also of the different types, traces of congruent attitudes or practices point to more general ideological or behavioural patterns, as part of a discourse of commonly understood signs, symbols, signifiers and norms. Unintentional data related to the relevant questions and possible tell-tale internal ruptures in a text should be viewed in relation to larger structures in the society in which they were produced and used. In light of the relationship between author and audience, text and reader, tradition and culture, one should ask what the pre-existing conditions were that made a specific source possible.[271] Fortunately, there is no need to build a background from scratch based on the available traces given that earlier research has produced analyses of the society and the culture, even if previous interpretations should, of course,

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Constantine V is tainted with hints of such practices, as also mentioned in Theophanes, *Chron.* 6259[AD 766/7]. Cf. Foss 2002, 162. According to Cranny-Francis et al. 2003, 19, a society based on compulsory heterosexual behaviour "operates as a defining and regulating principle" as 'heterosexist'. For a general lengthy discussion on Byzantine attitudes towards homosexuality, see the chapter entitled "Les pratiques homosexuelles" in Messis 2006, 724-866. McCail 1971, *passim*. on Agathias' erotic poetry.

[269] Cf. Herrin 2013, 97-8.

[270] Cf. Beaucamp 1992, 296.

[271] Clark 2004, 61, Macherey 1978, 150-4. Cf. also e.g. Lauxtermann 2003, 59, on Byzantine poetry more often being listened to than read in private.

be regarded with certain scepticism and not automatically taken for granted: they are, after all, just that - interpretations.

This type of inquiry produces a hypothetical reconstruction of a social and cultural discourse, but it is based on fragments of the past and the collected information they provide. Of necessity, it is a fragmentary picture, a mosaic with several missing parts because no knowledge was available. Nevertheless, it is a picture that reveals not only the outlines of figures but also general themes and the correlation between separate elements. It thereby gives insights into cultural attitudes and perceptions of female presence in public space.

All in all, the above discussion constitutes the theoretical prism through which the material presented in the following chapters is viewed and investigated.

II The cultural context and discourses of female gender

Byzantine history is by scholars often divided into the Early, Middle and Late Byzantine periods, but the divisions are not clear cut.[272] No consensus has been established and definitions vary slightly among scholars, depending on the tradition and the focal point of the work in question.[273] The chronological division recently adopted by Carolyn L. Connor in her book *Women of Byzantium* is also useful for this work in many ways. Connor delineates the following four periods: Late Antiquity up until 500 AD; Early Byzantium between 500 and 843 AD; Middle Byzantine between 843 and 1204; and finally Late Byzantium extending from 1204 to1453.[274] This study deals with a major part of the Early Byzantine period.

Byzantine society and culture could be described on a general level as a conglomeration of Hellenistic culture and Roman administrative and social structures, coloured by Christianity with its morals and ethics, itself a product of Semitic religion and Late Antique mysticism and traditions. All these factors contributed to the social construction that scholars now define as Byzantium.[275] They also contributed to the framework of social codes guiding the behaviour of individuals. To this has to be added events and changes in society related to economic, political and ideological factors, all of which have an impact on members of society and their circumstances in life, and on the options open to them in terms of activities, actions, choices and responses to different situations.

The 6th to the 8th centuries are marked by impoverished state finances. The late 6th and 7th centuries also experienced a steep population decline and the demographic trends did not turn upwards again until the mid-8th century. The multicultural and multilingual society of Late Antiquity continued into the 6th century but increasing external pressure and internal social changes brought on the so-called Byzantine 'Dark Age' in the 7th century. Some stability was re-established during the 8th century, creating the base for a new but slow cultural upswing during which the geographically diminished Empire started to re-build its economy while urban culture was

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[272] The founding of Constantinople in 330 is often taken as the starting point, and the early phase is considered to continue until the 6th century. The 7th century was a period of change where either ca. 600 is used as a divider or the whole of the 7th century is considered a transitional period. The lack of clear-cut political, cultural and social breaks in Byzantine history and the gradually happening changes is one cause for the variations in the periodisation. The Arabic conquests starting around the mid-7th century and the coinciding intrusions of Avars and Slavic tribes in the Balkans initiated what is defined as the Byzantine 'Dark Age' but estimates of its duration vary. It is either limited to the 7th and 8th centuries or continued into the 9th. One demarcation line is found in the middle of the 8th century when the Iconoclastic period began with the policy of denouncing the use of religious images, it being included in the 'Dark Age' either in part or as a whole. Opinions vary on how to define this 'Dark Age' and where to draw the line between the Early and the Middle Byzantine periods, whereas the period after the 'Dark Age' is considered as belonging to Middle Byzantium. One way avoiding this discussion is to abandon the tripartite division and in primarily to refer to the centuries in question.

[273] Most French studies refer to the Early Byzantine period as 'le Bas-Empire' often defined as the 4th - 7th centuries, while the Middle Byzantine period is defined as 'le Haute-Empire'. The Early Byzantine period is sometimes associated, to some extent, with the Early Christian era (including Late Antiquity and extending to the 5th or 6th century) in English studies, and the Middle and Late Byzantine period are also referred to as Mediaeval Byzantium.

[274] Connor 2004, vii-viii, xiii.

[275] E.g. Kazhdan & Constable 1982, also discussed by Mango 1981a, 48-9. Cameron 2006a gives a modern introduction to Byzantine history and culture, as well as to Byzantine studies.

transformed.[276]

A discourse existed within this society that went through major changes, a form of cultural agreement among those attributed with power, determining how to view the female gender, specifying proper behaviour, defining juridical rules and moral norms, and giving justifying explanations for ideological and normative boundaries.[277] The composite tradition from Antiquity coloured with Christian morals as presented by the Church fathers or in hagiographies, for example, produced a set of socially accepted rules and expectations, a framework of social codes and moral boundaries aimed at restraining and guiding female behaviour. This cultural tradition and the social rules affecting the discourse of female public behaviour are discussed below.

A. Public versus domestic: male and female in a hierarchical society

The division into public and private spheres, between domestic and public concerns, was a common theme in Antiquity, the public sphere being considered the male domain and care of the household belonging to women.[278] In Late Antiquity, with its Christian influence, John Chrysostom, among others, expressed with some eloquence his ideas on this matter, claiming that the male and female sexes were separated by nature in terms of both space and tasks.[279] Most scholars nowadays acknowledge that space has been associated with gender throughout history.[280] Traditional attitudes were also conveyed in Byzantine society: both written and pictorial sources echo the common association of women with the domestic and men with the public sphere.[281]

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[276] Cf. e.g. Herrin 2001, 26-8, 38-9, 47-50, for a short overview. For references and discussion on historical and socio-economic changes in the period, see Chapter. I.C, 23-5.

[277] Cranny-Francis et al., 2003, 94, on discourses as operating "by marking out or colonising a field of interest and then determining how that field can be legitimately experienced and recreated. /—/ Furthermore, discourses tend to work by constructing their own perspective as natural or inevitable", and further "discourse is also a means by which power is distributed in the matrix of force relations which constitutes society. A discourse can be seen as providing a trajectory for these force relations; that is, channelling those forces to produce certain effects which we experience as power."

[278] Cf. e.g. Arjava 1996, 128. Although according to Cooper 1996, 4, commenting on antiquity, the household could give indications of a man's position in the city. In that sense the private was also judged on the public social level. However, the discussion here concerns functional divisions and what was seen as proper spheres for the genders.

[279] Cf. Beaucamp 1992, 289-91. Messis 2006, 83-5, quoting Chrys. *Comment observer*, chapter 7, 118, Chrys., *Epistulae*, no. 170, col. 709-710, Chrys., *Novae homiliae* 5, chapter 3, col. 488. It echoes philosophical tradition going back to Aristotle, who claimed that men and women were different by nature and therefore had different tasks in society. This naturalising of a gendered division of social space, especially in the counterpart public-male and domestic-female, has a long tradition and continues to the present day. Cf. Bourdieu 1977, 89-90.

[280] E.g. as Hanawalt et al. 2000, x, note: "it is not only the use of space, however, that is engaging medievalists in a reevaluation of how medieval people thought and lived. The realization that people divided space by gender is becoming more apparent: women occupied rooms, houses, quarters in the cities and villages, while men's activities took them farther abroad to streets, highways, fields, cities, oceans, battles, and council tables. Space carried meanings. /---/ Not only did people create uses for space, but having done so, that space could influence the behaviour of those who occupied it; defining space tended to prescribe the behaviour within it. Words, metaphors, images, signs, poetic illusions, and personally created identities all used space or place to add meaning to the external world."

[281] E.g. Messis 2006, 149-50, 152-4, 157-8, 296-8, 318-9, on the theological tradition of the public-male / domestic-female division and the related linguistic and abstract division of Byzantine social ideals in a "masculinité de culture" and a "féminité de nature".

As Kate Cooper points out, on the other hand, on an abstract level the division between public and private was not always as clear cut as one might think, and it was sometimes blurred even in the household and the family, which also had their public side. The family and the state of the household could affect a man's public reputation and the 'public eye' tended to turn its scrutinising gaze to so-called private life to evaluate the public reputation of an individual.[282] Nevertheless, the common view was that the public sphere was a male domain and the domestic sphere was more suited for women, although it might be open to public judgment of an individual's morals.

On a practical level the family, the family house, the household and the domestic space, all semantically slightly different but essential elements of the private sphere, in many ways constituted the actual realm of Byzantine women. Beaucamp, while studying Egyptian papyri from the 4th and 5th centuries, found affirmation that ideological beliefs often conformed with practice.[283] The domestic sphere dominated the life and activities of most women. This is not to say that women were not involved in activities in public space or did not act in contrast to ideas on gender-divided space: the domestic space was simply the habitual one for most of the female population.

Taking care of the household, which was considered the main duty of a woman and especially a wife, was no minor task and usually meant more than just providing food and keeping the house clean. As Alice-Mary Talbot notes, the running of a household in Byzantine times was labour-intensive.[284] Domestic management included not only food preparation and preservation, but also providing clothing as well as other necessities for family members, often including the basic phases of spinning and cloth making. Depending on the size and social standing of the household, these chores were handled either by the wife and daughters or by servants and slaves under the supervision of the mistress of the house. Chores in the countryside often also included gardening and animal rearing. As Angeliki Laiou notes, the ideal was "the virtue of economic self-sufficiency of the household, and woman's role in keeping it self-sufficient". Ideologically, running the household was the role and primary occupation granted to women, but Laiou also points out that this was only the ideal situation, as women in reality participated in society with their work efforts and financial assets.[285] She was referring mainly to the 11th - 14th centuries, but her remarks also have relevance with regard to earlier centuries.

These ideals of a woman's primary duties within the household revolve around her bearing and rearing children, as well as food preparation and cloth making. Spinning and weaving in

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[282] Cooper 1996, esp.4 & 138, but discussed throughout her book, noting that the modern "distinction between "public" and "private" might have baffled ancient men and women accustomed to perceiving the household as both the index and the end of men's struggle for position within the city". Cf. Messis 2006, 149-50, 152-4, 157-8, 318-9, who urges to caution of ideas to restrict women to the private sphere and men to the public sphere, as the private and the public often became muddled. He prefers to speak of more or less private and more or less public space.

[283] See Beaucamp 1993, 187-8, 190-4, on household business and gender division. The papyri confirm the public/outside as the male sphere and the private/inside/domestic as the female sphere, that women tended to stay at home taking care of the household while men travelled on diverse business. Men remained in charge of affairs even when away but delegated some parts to individuals at home. They seemed to take care of purchases for the household, whereas women could be in charge of the execution of things at home, monetary affairs included, through the directions given by the absent men via correspondence. Cf. Moschos, *Prat.Spir*. Ch. 75.

[284] Talbot 1997, 126.

[285] Laiou 1981, 243-5.

particular were frequent *topoi* for the dutiful and good wife, typifying an appropriate occupation for a Byzantine woman.[286] As Laiou points out, this was "seen as the primary and only totally accepted economic function of women".[287] One way to exemplify this ideal in the literature was with reference to Penelope, one of the classical archetypes of a good and faithful wife from a heroic mythological past representing ideal wifely virtues and closely associated with the female task of weaving. A funeral poem by Cyrus the Poet from the 5th or early 6th century serves as an example:

> Maria had passed her thirtieth year and was approaching her thirty-third,
> when Hades cast at her his cruel dart and carried off the woman
> who was like a rosebud, a very counterpart of Penelope in her work.[288]

These archetypal female tasks are also present in an illustration in the *Wiener Genesis* manuscript. The image (Fig. 1a) conveys the Old Testament story about Potiphar's wife tempting Joseph, but the milieu is distinctively Byzantine and contemporary to the production of the manuscript.[289] The right-hand side of the upper case of the image and the entire lower case show women engaged in what were considered typical women's chores. Given that it portrays the household of a high-ranking lady, the women probably represent servants. Five women of different ages are taking care of some small children and spinning yarn.[290] Hence, what is depicted are the two chores that ideologically at highest degree symbolise the tasks designated to women - those of child rearing and cloth making, often, as in this picture, represented by spinning.

An expressively female space is sometimes designated in Byzantine sources by the word *gynaikeion*.[291] Lynda Garland refers to these occasionally mentioned women's quarters as an "elusive feature of Byzantine life", in that it is difficult to determine exactly what they were, to what extent they featured in ordinary households and what they signified.[292] Discussing the 11th century she points out:

> to an extent, such occupations [spinning and weaving] imply the need for "women's quarters" where looms can be set up and work continued undisturbed, and the existence of

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[286] Cf. Roman literature where esp. wool working was a female virtue and the symbol of a good wife, e.g. Larsson Lovén 1998, 85-93.

[287] Laiou 1981, 243-4. Cf. Garland 1988, 377-8, 391-2, Talbot 1997, 126-7, 130-1, 135-6, and Kazhdan 1998, 16.

[288] *Anth. Gr.* VII:557 (transl. W.R. Patton). Penelope has often been used as a symbol for a true, constant and waiting wife, but here is esp. referred to her work, which was endless and untired weaving.

[289] *Cod. theol. graec.* 31, fol. 16 r. (Gerstinger 1931, vol. 2, 31). The manuscript is usually dated to the early 6th c. and possibly of a Syrian provenance, Gerstinger 1931, 16-28. Milieu and clothing show similarities with other art representations of the period, e.g. Ravenna mosaics which depict contemporary individuals.

[290] Some trees seem to indicate an exterior setting, but one could consider if the women are depicted in what might be defined as the women's quarters ('*gynaikeion*') of a higher-class household. Cf. also Beaucamp 1992, 289-90, for the ideology on division of functions between men and women and female tasks.

[291] In antiquity this was usually a more secluded part of a house, more remote from streets and public space, or even a separate building reserved for the women of the household, a women's quarters to which men generally did not have access.

[292] Garland 1988, 364. Cf. Kazhdan 1998, 4-5, who discusses it in connection with the question of the degree of confinement of Byzantine women (based for the most part on material from the 9th - 12th centuries).

> such quarters certainly does not necessarily imply that women are secluded therein. Obviously, in the mid eleventh century, the women's quarters in the palace seem to have been no more than private apartments.[293]

A similar interpretation of rooms used by the women of a household comes to mind from one of the stories in John Moschos' *Pratum Spirituale*. This religious anecdote from the 7th century is about a merchant leaving his wife and six-year-old daughter in the family house together with one servant while he travelled on business to Constantinople.[294] It confirms the ideal of womenfolk keeping to the domestic sphere while the men take care of business outside. The setting is somewhere in the middle range of the social and economic scale of society. The wife and daughter are residing together in a chamber of the house in which the woman is doing some work when they are miraculously saved from the servant's evil plans to kill them with the intention of running away with the family fortune. The servant, who in the story goes blind when he tries to enter the room, calls for the woman to come out, but instead she asks the servant to step in. The setting gives the impression of private quarters in which a wife can keep to herself with her daughter and carry out her tasks, but not of strict enclosure or segregation.

Although, as Talbot notes, the general ideal was that respectable women kept to the house and restricted their association with men not related to the family, there has been considerable discussion about how strict the confinement was in reality.[295] Restriction to the house might have been more than a mere ideal for unmarried girls from a good family. A girl who had reached puberty was considered of marriageable age.[296] The reputation of a daughter not yet married had to be protected, not only for her own sake but also for the sake of her family. This ideal, inherited from antiquity, of unmarried girls being kept out of sight of men from outside the family is demonstrated in a poem by Agathias Scholasticus:

> Young men have not so much suffering
> as is the lot of us poor tender-hearted girls.
> They have friends of their own age
> to whom they confidently tell their cares and sorrows,
> and they have games to cheer them,
> and they can stroll in the streets
> and let their eyes wander from one picture to another.
> We on the contrary are not even allowed to see the daylight,

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[293] Garland 1988, 379-80. Cf. Kazhdan 1998, 5-6, who discusses empresses' quarters on a broader chronological horizon, coming to similar conclusions. See McCormick 2000, 141, on the quarters of empresses in the 6th century.

[294] Moschos, *Prat.Spir*. Ch. 75.

[295] Talbot 1997, 129. Cf. Kazhdan 1998, 1-8, who critically examines sources from the later Byzantine period and discusses the problem of the alleged confinement of females to the house and how real this actually was. He notes some ambivalence among the accounts and concludes that many statements are rhetorical, expressing an ideology more than praxis, what he calls a 'moral construct'. Cf. also Arjava 1996, 245-7, 256.

[296] The law determined the legal age of marriage for a girl as 12, which was the age when girls officially reached puberty. For boys it was 14. *Inst.* 1.22.

but are kept hidden in our chambers,
the prey of dismal thoughts.[297]

The topic goes back to Antiquity in the eastern Mediterranean area. The ideal of keeping unmarried maidens from contact with men outside the family and of a maintained confinement to the family household has long traditions in this cultural area. It continued through the period discussed here and beyond.[298] John of Ephesus included a few stories about women in his *Lives of Eastern Saints*. As a widow Euphemia had taken up a pious way of life, dedicating her time to charity, while she and her daughter earned their living by weaving goats' wool for the noble women of the city. She rented a larger house and turned it into a *martyrion*, reserving an inner chamber for the two women. While Euphemia waited on exiled monks taking refuge in the house "her daughter, because she was young, she kept carefully inside day and night, lest she harmed one of the men by her sight, or herself be harmed seeing one of them."[299] There is also an account in the *Life of St. Philaretos the Merciful* (relating to a late-8th-century context) of how imperial messengers arrived at the old man's home to inspect suitable bridal candidates for Constantine VI. Philaretos is reluctant to let his granddaughters leave their room, explaining that although the family was reduced to poverty, "our daughters have never left their chambers". Eventually he allows the envoys to enter, together with himself and their mothers, the room in which they reside and thus to look at them.[300] This ideal of confinement to family quarters applied specifically to unmarried girls, but on a more general level highly respected women were, to some extent, expected to be kept away from contact with male strangers, as suggested in the report in Agathias' *History*, quoted in the beginning of Chapter I.[301]

Both of Agathias' texts imply that not all women were expected to abide by the strictest rules of segregation between the sexes. Social status clearly was a factor determining with what austerity such ideals were upheld. Civil status and age also affected ideals of female mobility. With reference to the story of Philaretos, it seems that although unmarried granddaughters are supposed to keep to

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[297] *Anth. Gr.,* V:297 (6th century; translation by W.R. Patton).

[298] Kazhdan 1998, 2-3, mentions examples from the 9th to the 11th century. Cf. Herrin 2013, 85. As a *topos* it is also used by Manasses to describe the opposite behaviour of the manly soldier emperor Basil II (966-1025), who did not pass his time in the chambers of the palace like a young girl escaping the presence of men, Manasses, *Synopsis Chronike* (ed. Lampsidis, v, 5903-4), see Messis 2006, 464.

[299] John of Ephesus, *Lives*, chapter 12. (6th century; translation by S.P. Brock & S. Ashbrook Harvey, 1987, 129). Euphemia possibly belonged to the category of Church widows. Religious controversy had displaced the monks.

[300] *Life of St. Philaretos*, 4.c. (translation by Rydén 2002, 89). The story takes place in the village of Amnia near Gangra, the capital of Paphlagonia. Philarethos circumstances were originally good, *Life of St. Philaretos*, 1 & 4.b (Rydén 2002, 61, 85, 87). The *Life* presents Philaretos as a model of virtue. Correspondingly, the image of the strict confinement of unmarried daughters communicates the normative ideal of conduct in a respected and honourable family. Cf. Talbot 1997, 120, and Kazhdan 1998, 2-3.

[301] Agathias, *Hist.* V.3.7., see above, 3. See Kazhdan 1998, 2-3, for analogous comments in later sources, e.g. Michael Attaleiates describing the earthquake of 1064. He also mentions other sources from the 9th to the 15th centuries indicating that the ideal continued throughout the Byzantine period. Attitudes may even have hardened in the Middle Byzantine period: a law from the 9th century denying women the right to act as witnesses in most court cases contains strong rhetoric in favour of women keeping out of sight of male eyes and out of a male space of this kind, Leo VI, *Nov.*, no. 48 (p. 188-190), see e.g. Geanakoplos 1984, 304.

their room, and even his married daughters meet the messengers only in the inner room of the house, his wife, being already of a certain age and in a leading position among the women in the household, is called out to meet the envoys the day before.[302] A similar pattern emerges from the story of Euphemia and her daughter. The implication is that codes of propriety slightly differed depending on the woman's social position, civil status and age.[303] This should be considered when the source material is evaluated. Generalising that the ideal was for all women to remain confined in the family house, or occasionally even more strictly in some sort of women's quarters (a '*gynaikeion*'), is therefore too simplistic an interpretation. There is evidence that women also participated in society outside the home, and this is discussed in the following chapters.[304]

This is not to deny, that the ratio of individuals being present in public space favoured the male population, or that women were clearly connected to the domestic sphere. The norm was to associate women with the home and the household, but occasionally it also worked the other way around: a household or a house could be associated with a woman. A papyrus from 6th-century Egypt concerning some monetary transactions mentions the "glorious house" of a woman named Sophia.[305] Sophia was probably a widow, but her adult son is also mentioned in the document. Alice-Mary Talbot observes that some widows had considerable power as head of the household and the family, even if there was an adult son. According to the figures she gives from early 14th -century Macedonia, some 20 per cent of the households were headed by widows.[306] Eleven of the men listed in a 6th-century tax register from Hermopolis are identified by their *matronym* for some reason.[307] The papyrus referring to Sophia does not reveal whether she was the owner of the property, or whether it was a symbolic reference to her as head of the household. Interestingly, in contrast a pre-Justinian law, reproduced in the *Digesta* and translated into Greek in the later *Basilica*, insisted that upon marriage a woman lives in her husband's house, this being one of the requirements for a marriage.[308]

There are several reasons for the discrepancy. One is the difference between jurisprudence and social practice: juridically a house could belong to the man, whereas socially it and the household might be are associated with the woman. Another reason relates to differences in class and civil status. Law texts are general and refer to all wives and all women in society. The law concerns the juridical aspect of marriage, which requires the wife to live with her husband. The specific case in the papyrus, on the other hand, seems to concern a woman of some wealth and social standing. She could therefore be the owner of the house and not merely the mistress in the capacity of wife or widow. Some stories in John Moschos' *Pratum Spirituale* exemplify such circumstances.

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[302] *Life of St. Philaretos*, 4.b & c. (translation by Rydén 2002, 87, 89). In comparison, the male offspring joined the emissaries directly when they were dined in the house.

[303] Cf. Kazhdan 1998, 5, notes: "our [Byzantine] authors' disagreement with regard to who was confined in the women's quarters - all women, or only noble women, or only young unmarried maidens ("virgins")", thereby lifting forth factors like class and civil status.

[304] Cf. Kazhdan 1998, 3, on the ample evidence of women partaking in activities on most levels of society.

[305] *Stud. Pal.* VIII 1090-1097, and *P. Erl*. 67. Beaucamp 1992, 136.

[306] Talbot 1997, 129. Cf. Laiou 1981, 247.

[307] Bagnall et al. 2011, 68-171. See also 65, note 333.

[308] *Dig.* 5.1.65. Beaucamp 1990, 270-1.

One tale from Alexandria is about a nun living in seclusion in her own house, and another is about a rich orphaned girl who lives in the house she has inherited from her parents.[309] In the latter story there is no doubt that the young woman owns the house. Similarly, Athanasia, a woman mentioned in the *Life of St. Matrona of Perge* is young, rich and married, and she owns her own property, as does Antiochiane, who donated a property in the vicinity of Constantinople which then became Matrona's convent.[310]

Regardless of property ownership, however, not only did the mistress of the house or the female head of a household have a certain status and influence, she also had responsibilities, for which she could be held accountable not only to the family but also to the surrounding society. Patriarch Nikephoros recalls an incident at the funeral of Emperor Heraklios' first wife Eudokia. A slave girl spat from an upper-floor window as the funeral procession passed by on the street below and the spit happened to land on the funeral garment of the deceased empress. This aroused such fury in the funeral crowd that they captured the girl and sentenced her to death there and then without further trial. The girl's mistress, obviously fearing for her life and realising that she was in danger from the furious crowd, disappeared before they could get hold of her. The implication is that she could be held accountable for the actions of her slave girl.[311]

Although associated with the domestic sphere, women were not strictly limited to it. Talbot points to many excuses and reasons for women to venture from the house, although their behaviour outside the domestic sphere was limited by a set of moral codes.[312] Special circumstances, especially crises (including natural disasters such as earthquakes, and manmade disasters such as war or the siege of a city) affected society in ways that took women out of a private existence and into public space and public attention, and therefore also into recorded events.[313] Charalambos Messis, in turn, sees women as partaking in the public sphere, but in a way by proxy, through the power of the male members of their family (such as a father, a brother or a husband).[314] However, the sources show that women were active beyond the domestic sphere even in everyday life.[315]

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[309] Moschos*, Prat.spir.,* Ch. 60 & 207.

[310] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapters 34-6, 42.

[311] Nikephoros, *Brev.* 3. The law clearly stated that a woman was juridically responsible for her own slaves, e.g. *Dig.* 3.3.39, *Dig*. 15.1.3 § 2. Cf. White 1982, 543-4. Cf. the story in Leontios, *St. Symeon*, chapter 18.b: a slave girl becomes pregnant and it is the mistress who handles the matter. Eudokia was the first wife of Emperor Heraklios and died in AD 612, Garland 1999, 62. *Chron. Pasch*., AD 612 [p.702-3], and Theophanes, *Chron.* AM 6102, 6103 [AD 609/10, 610/11] also mention her death.

[312] Talbot 1997, 132. Cf. Garland 1988, 391-2.

[313] Cf. Talbot 1997, 129-30, and e.g. Kazhdan 1998, 3, 5.

[314] Messis 2006, 319. Cf. Bourdieu 1977, 41, discussing the Kabyle society, noting that women's unofficial power only works by proxy. See also Arjava 1996, 253-4.

[315] Cf. Kazhdan 1998, 3-4, who notes the ambivalence in the sources between ideals of female confinement and accounts clearly showing that women engaged in activities on all levels of society, namely financial, political, religious and cultural. Kazhdan seems to be one of few scholars who is clearly taking the standpoint and verbalising that many sources do imply freedom of movement among Byzantine women and their active participation in society. The emphasis is otherwise usually on restriction to the domestic sphere, whereas movement outside is discussed in terms of irregularities or exceptions.

B. Ideal womanhood: in praise of virginity and motherhood

Praise of certain ideals and the presentation of idealistic models are ways to put pressure on women to direct their behaviour in an aspired direction.[316] Young people learn the 'correct' way to be a girl or a boy, male or female, and how to behave accordingly, including with their bodies, through embodiment and social experience, for example. Interpersonal, institutional, physical and symbolic encounters, social practice, as well as ideas and value systems create acculturation by social pressure, shaping individuals to assume culturally created gender roles.[317]

In early Byzantine society, as in most pre-modern societies, being a wife and a mother was considered to be a woman's main role.[318] As Angeliki Laiou notes, the family as a social structure was strengthened between the 4th and the 8th centuries through actions by both the Church and the state.[319] The family was usually the basic unit and the entity with which a person associated him or herself and by which he or she was defined socially. Women in particular were defined by their family relations, primarily by their connection to some male relative, as daughters, sisters or wives.[320] Even so, as Laiou points out with regard to later centuries, the Byzantine family was neither purely patriarchal nor purely patrilineal.[321]

Christianity created an alternative model for a life path, as virginity and an ascetic life became ideals that could also be pursued by women. Whereas monastics, at least in theory, cast off all links with the outside world, women still associated themselves and were identified with their families. As Alice-Mary Talbot observes: "although the Byzantines idealized virginity and considered it superior to marriage, the family was still the key unit of their society. [—] a woman was always linked with a family, whether at home or in the convent."[322] She notes in another article, with regard to the middle and late Byzantine period, that the importance of the family was visible in monastic foundations as they usually commemorated the anniversaries of the death not only of the

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316 Cf. Cranny-Francis et al. 2003, 92-3, noting that "our ways of talking about issues are also our ways of thinking about issues, and further, they tend to determine how we act". A discourse provides the legitimate perspective, fixing norms for concepts and theories, and a 'sexist' discourse specifies what men and women may be and defines how they should act as well as their position in all parts of society.

317 Cranny-Francis et al. 2003, 83-4. Cf. Spiegel 2005, 18-9.

318 Cf. Herrin 1984, 172. Law texts also emphasise this, e.g. *Dig*. 21.1.14 § 1: "to procreate and rare children is a woman's greatest and most important task", and *Just.* 6.40.2, which argues that woman has been created especially for childbearing and all her wishes are directed towards this goal.

319 Laiou 2009, 56-7.

320 Laio 1985, 65, discussing *typika* for convents of the middle and late Byzantine period, notes that the women writing or commissioning these documents identified themselves primarily as part of a family (often through their parents, husbands, or both). Cf. Messis 2006, 134, who notes that men tended to be defined by their social role, and women by their affiliation with men. A man could also be shamed through his female family members, cf. Nikephoros, *Brev.* 45, telling how Justinian II avenged himself on his bodyguard Helias by having his children murdered in their mother's arms and then marrying her off to his own cook, an Indian by birth and said to be extremely ugly. Such disgrace has several layers: not only is the wife taken away and given to another man, the man is socially inferior, a foreigner, and on top of all this hideous.

321 Laiou 2009, 58

322 Talbot 1997, 142-3.

founder but also of the founder's family members .[323]

Virginity and motherhood became the main ideals offered to women. Both were present in the object of increasing devotional interest, the ideal female model, the Virgin Mary. Women were appreciated in their role as mothers throughout antiquity, but a particular emphasis on the mother figure seemed to grow in Late Antiquity and the Early Byzantine period, going hand in hand with the growing worship of the Virgin Mary.[324] Not only were churches dedicated to the Virgin, she was also present in public and in private in various types of art representations from mosaics and icons to ivory objects, silver vessels, coins, official lead seals, pendants, bracelets, rings and even textiles.[325] It is impossible to determine which was the cause and which was the effect, but the two phenomena, the developing cult of *Theotokos* (the Mother of God) and a seemingly strengthening emphasis on the mother, developed simultaneously, possibly in the end as a symptom of other both ideological and factual changes in society.[326] As Talbot notes in her article on Byzantine women: "the most important role of the women was to bear children and it is as mothers that they are most often praised."[327] Mothers are indeed often mentioned and praised in the sources. Agathias Scholasticus, for example, refers in his history to the mother of Anthemius of Tralles, the architect of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, who also had several famous and skilled brothers. He praised her as fortunate for having given birth to such talented sons.[328] Interestingly enough, there is no mention in the text of their father. Kazhdan, discussing somewhat later periods, notes the same lack of a father figure in Byzantine texts. Men are seldom praised in their roles as fathers, although they are praised in many other capacities. The tendency is to emphasise the relationship between mother and child and simply to omit the father from the narrative.[329] Michael Kaplan similarly observes that the mother had a more important role than the father in the lives of saints from the 5th to the 9th centuries.[330] Theodore of Studios wrote an *encomion* to his mother Theoktiste on her death in the

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[323] Talbot 1994, 117-9.

[324] The cult grew after the Council in Ephesos (431) in which Mary was acknowledged as *Theotokos*. It was particularly prominent in the 6th and 7th centuries. See e.g. Cameron 2000a, 5, 12-4, Mango 2000, 17-24, Cormack 2000a, 92-6, Cormack 2000b, 108, Brubaker & Cunningham 2007, 236-40, 247-9, Gallagher 2008, 584. Cf. also Milinović 2000, 363-6, Pentcheva 2006, 11-52,198-90, and Kaplan 2004, 35-6.

[325] Cameron 2000a, 5, 11-3; Mango 2000, 20-1; Cormack 2000a, 92-5; Cormack 2000b, 108; Tsigiridas 2000, 125-6, 132; Cutler 2000, 167-9; Mundell Mango 2000, 195-8; Rutschowscaya 2000, 220-2; Yeroulanou 2000, 227-8, 232, Pls.172, 181; Barber 2000, 253-5; Maguire 2000, 279-85; Vassilaki (ed.) 2000, Cat. nos. 1-3, 5-11, 13; Maguire 2011, 39, 42-4, 51, and Pls. 3.2-5, 8, 16; Allen 2011, 87; Krausmüller 2011, 219-28; Brubaker & Haldon 2011, 149.

[326] Cf. Messis 2006, 275-7, 292-3, 391, who makes an interesting point about the image of Christ: before the stronger emphasis of Virgin Mary He was represented in a more androgyne way, with both male and female characteristics. It was only after the cult of *Theotokos* developed that it became more masculine, when female religious identification was presented with an alternative prototype. According to Messis, Christ and His mother *Theotokos* constitute the ideal couple, portraying the ideal man and the ideal woman in the world. The new ideal had been introduced by the beginning of the 7th century, the iconography of Christ having abandoned the beardless prototype of Dionysos/Apollo and being modelled on the bearded Zeus instead.

[327] Talbot 1997, 118.

[328] Agathias, *Hist*. V.6.5. (2nd half of the 6th century). Anthemius' other brothers included another architect, a lawyer and two doctors.

[329] Kazhdan 1998, 10-12. Mainly on texts from the 9th century onwards, but with references to earlier material.

[330] Kaplan 2004, 36-42. Cf. Browning 1981, 121, on the often only vague references to the fathers of many so-called low-level saints.

early years of the 9th century, praising her virtues and her role in the spiritual education of her children. According to Byzantine tradition, mothers were expected to provide their children with a moral education, and to exert advice and a positive influence on close family members.[331]

The father is not merely marginalised he is totally absent in the *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, where the future saint was raised in an inn kept by his mother, grandmother and aunt.[332] Social realities occasionally were such that men, for one reason or another, were identified through their mothers. Among some 270 males mentioned in the 6th-century tax register from Hermopolis, eleven are identified by their *matronyme* rather than by their *patronyme* or profession.[333] The female lineage is also underlined in several poems on church restorations and building activities commissioned by Anicia Juliana, a lady with imperial ancestry. They tell of how she followed in her mother's and grandmother's footsteps in these activities.[334]

Hagiographies, even when the saint is an offspring of an ordinary marriage with both parents present, focus more strongly on the mother, as in the *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*:[335] some father/child relationships portrayed in the *Life of St. Mary/Marinos* constitute a rare exception.[336] In the first chapters Mary enters a male monastery in disguise so as not to be separated from her widowed father, who had raised her. Later an innkeeper accuses her, disguised as monk Marinos, of having made his only daughter pregnant. Mary/Marinos takes the newly born illegitimate child and raises him as a father.[337] Even in this case it is the female saint, not the male figures, who show the most compassion related to family matters, and the lack of a mother is the reason for her close relationship with her father, who took over the parental role. As Catia Galateriotou notes: "Byzantine eulogies of women tend to be confined to mother figures". This shows the importance and primacy of the mother role on an ideological level.[338]

A traditional reason for the esteem was that wives as mothers fulfilled their most important role, alongside caring for the household, in giving their husbands legitimate heirs. Being childless was a cause of great concern for a wife, as well as for her husband, and this is clear from stories about couples seeking remedies for childlessness from a local saint.[339] It cannot be the sole explanation for the increase in praise of motherhood and good mothers from Late Antiquity onwards,

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[331] Theod. Stoud. *Laudatio*., a funeral oration written between 797-802. Hatlie 2009, 46-7, 54, 56, Efthymiadis & Featherstone 2007, 22, and Efthymiadis 2011, 101-2.

[332] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, 3-7 (early 7th century, partly relating to the 6th century). Cf. Kaplan 2004, 36.

[333] See Bagnall et al. 2011, 68-171.

[334] See *Anth. Gr.* I:10 on the church of St. Polyeuktos, and *Anth. Gr.* I:12, 14-17, related to the church St. Euphemia of Olybrius. These relate to the early 6th century. Cf. Connor 1999, 498-9, 502-4, Withby 2006, 162, 165–6, and Lauxtermann 2003, 31-2, 91-2.

[335] E.g. *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, 3-8, 16. Cf. Kaplan 2004, 37-9. Cf. Theod. Stoud. *Laudatio*. Efthymiadis & Featherstone 2007, 22, and Efthymiadis 2011, 101-2.

[336] The text is from the 6th - 7th centuries, but refers to a somewhat earlier period, see e.g. Constantinou 2005, 95.

[337] *Life of St. Mary/Marinos*, chapters 3-4, 9-10, and 13-14. A close father-daughter relationship is also described in another story about Euphrosyne, a cross-dressing female, see Constantinou 2005, 94, 122-4.

[338] Galateriotou 1985, 81.

[339] E.g. *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapters 93, 140, 145, 148, Moschos *Prat. Spir.*, chapter 114, and *Life of St. Anthousa of Mantineon*, 19 (*SynaxCP* 851). Sometimes it was not the lack of a child, but of a son, that caused the grief, as in the *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, chapters 3-4: the woman has two daughters but she prays for a son.

however, in that it goes beyond the traditional emphasis on motherhood as women's main role and duty. Michel Kaplan registers these changing attitudes towards mothers in the saints' lives, which he sees as reflecting a possible transformation in the position of women.[340] This coincided with legal improvements in the position of mothers, which is discussed later.[341]

The opposite ideal was that of the eternal virgin, a woman dedicating her life to religious chastity. Religious texts from the early Church Fathers onwards praise chastity and virginity as the highest form of spiritual life for both men and women. There are several stories exemplifying saintly women who kept and protected their purity and virginity at all costs. By renouncing her sexuality, becoming an asexual *neutrum* in a way and keeping herself pure, a woman could be considered as reaching some kind of equality with men on a spiritual level. It was enough for a male to achieve an ascetic life, but a female ascetic also had to deny her gender and become 'like a man'.[342] Messis discusses how Christian ideology introduced an alternative social and sexual logic to gender compared to the traditional Greco-Roman construction. In moral and religious terms there was a reversal of values to some part: a 'feminisation' of the masculine and a 'masculinisation' of the feminine that strived to abolish sex and sexuality within ascetic ideals. To some extent this opened the door for a certain degree of equality, or equal opportunity, at least. Nevertheless, Messis notes, women were invited to become 'like men' only on a spiritual and a moral level: a masculine woman was usually considered an abhorrence in the social domain. In later Byzantine literature, at least, masculinity in a woman was a quality that exclusively had to be restricted to the soul, whereas the ideal woman kept her femininity in every aspect of her external appearance, such as gestures, comportment, clothing and respect for codes of female appearance.[343]

Interestingly, female sexuality seems to be the problem regardless of whether it is a man or a woman who is trying to keep his or her purity when aspiring towards a saintly life.[344] At the point in John of Ephesus' narrative when holy men gather at her dwelling, Susan the ascetic bids that the men and the women settle in separate places, saying: "it is not possible for our female sex to live among men - since the attack of the evil one against holy men is mostly made through woman, even when they are far away, how much more so when they are near?".[345] Further, when religious texts present a man as an obstacle for a virtuous woman, it is not his sexuality that tempts her: the issue is the man's desire for the woman and his attempts to lure her from her path of a religious life.[346] It

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[340] Kaplan 2004, 42-4.

[341] See chapter II.E, 88-9.

[342] Cf. Cameron 1989b, 181-9, on the rhetoric of virginity, its implications for women in Late Antique society, and how female sexuality is a problem for ascetics. See also, Casey 2013, 171-6. See Constantinou 2005, 19-120, on the bodily aspects of virgin martyrs, repentant prostitutes and saintly female cross-dressers: virginity is stressed in the first case, whereas being or appearing 'like a man' is important in the other two. See Herrin 1984, 179, on female saints disguised as monks, and Garland 2013, 31, on their possible fictional nature.

[343] Messis 2006, 144-5, 150, 266, 280-91, 567, 574, 582-3. Cf. Halsall 1999, 106-7, 185-8, on the masculinisation of women saints.

[344] Cf. Constantinou 2004, 417, who notes that sexuality and the holy woman's sexual status always are central to the stories of female saints (they are virgins, ex-prostitutes, mothers, wives who consummate their marriage or chaste widows) but not of male saints.

[345] John of Ephesus, *Lives*, chapter 27 (Brock & Ashbrook Harvey 1987, 138).

[346] E.g. Moschos *Prat. Spir.*, chapter 60.

is the female body that is 'the problem', causing male desire and subsequent attempts at seduction.[347] Messis further notes the tendency in medical texts and theological views to deny that women, at least virtuous and 'natural' women, even had any sexual desires: they are seen as only having the desire to get married and beget children. Female desire was associated with exotic, sinful, bad or devilish women.[348] Therefore, the direction of sexual temptation is usually explained in terms of male desire for the female body, not the other way around. One of few exceptions is to be found in *Pratum Spirituale*: a young widow confesses that out of love for her neighbour and her desire to marry him she killed her two small children, the man having proclaimed that he would not marry a woman with children by another man.[349] Even here the desire was at least in part to get remarried. It is also the sinful woman who is described here, and likewise in the story of Mary of Egypt who sought sexual relationships to satisfy her own lust before she converted to an ascetic and virtuous way of life.[350]

Although virginity was highly esteemed within religious culture, it otherwise could also be seen as a threat to the continuity of society. Not everyone fully embraced this ideal professed by religious authors for the most part, and a debate offering counterarguments seems to have arisen around the issue.[351] Kate Cooper provides interesting background information on the Late Antiquity discourse of self-mastery and sexual temperance as a virtue for a man, pointing out that the debate between advocates of virginity and promoters of societal continuity through married life and the begetting of children began in the 4th century.[352] A poem written by Erathostenes Scholasticus in the 6th century reflects this polemic:

> Fair are the treasures of virginity,
> but if it were observed by all it would put an end to life.
> Therefore live in lawful wedlock,
> and give a mortal to the world to replace thee; but avoid lechery.[353]

The tug-of-war between married life and the production of heirs and a spiritual life spent in chastity was continuous. An episode in a *vita* from the 9th century tells of a wealthy widow with two daughters living in Constantinople. The older child was inclined towards learning and an ascetic life, but the mother desired her beautiful daughter to marry and continue the family line. Given that this is a religious text virginity prevails, and eventually the monastic habit was assumed not only by the elder daughter but also by her sister, her mother and some of their maidservants.[354]

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[347] Cf. Constantinou 2005, 16, noting that the male body is not part of male sanctity in the same way as the female body is in the creation of female holiness.
[348] Messis 2006, 175-9, 322-3, 343,
[349] Moschos, *Prat. Spir*., chapter 76.
[350] *Life of St. Mary of Egypt*, chapters 18-21.
[351] See e.g. Laiou 1982, 198, and Talbot 1997, 118, on the clash between the ideals of celibacy and married life.
[352] Cooper 1996, 1-17,88-101.
[353] *Anth. Gr.* IX.:444 (translation by W.R. Patton).
[354] *Life of Sts. David, Symeon, and George of Lesbos*, 193-4, 196 (the episode relates to the 820s). The older daughter originally went by the name of Hypathia, which was changed to Febronia.

Even religious authors admitted that a purely religious life of chastity and celibacy was not a solution for everyone, putting forward married life as the next best alternative. Either way, as discussed above, the family was still the basic source of identification for women.[355]

Virginity was not an issue that was restricted to women embracing a religious life. Expectations of virginity and motherhood fused in the lives of young unmarried girls and were of concern for every unmarried maid and her parents. A young girl was expected to be a virgin on entering into marriage, one of the main arguments being to ensure that the future husband was the father of subsequent children.[356] Protecting the virginity of an unmarried girl thus had great importance, which is also reflected in the severe rhetoric of laws on rape, especially when a virgin was involved.[357] The loss of virginity was not only a moral dilemma, it tangibly affected a girl's chances on the marriage market and her future prospects. This is implied in the above-mentioned story of an innkeeper who accused Mary/Marinos for his unmarried daughter's pregnancy.[358] One reason why the father was so upset was that his plans for a secure old age were spoiled: he would not be able to have the son-in-law he had wished for, one who would provide for him later in life.

Virginity, as well as chaste behaviour in general, and motherhood were therefore the primary ideals displayed before Byzantine women. A dedicatory poem by Agathias Scholasticus paints a concise picture of the ideal path of a woman from a virtuous girl to wife and the mother of sons:

> Callirhoe dedicates to Aphrodite her garland,
> to Pallas her tress and to Artemis her girdle;
> for she found a husband she wanted,
> she grew up in virtue and she gave birth to boys.[359]

Ideals of virginity and motherhood demanded that women were guarded from any suspicion of indecency and lechery. A virgin, referring to both holy virgins and unmarried girls, was easily under suspicion regarding her purity, and a wife might be suspected of adultery or unchaste conduct. In either case this led to ideals that promoted the minimising of any affiliation between a woman and men outside the immediate family if she wanted to preserve her reputation. Praise of virginity and motherhood therefore corroborated with the ideological connection of women with the domestic sphere, or relatively enclosed privacy, consequently affecting female movability. To what extent and in which social strata such principles were followed in practice are discussed in later chapters.

Notions of ideal womanhood included chaste behaviour and preferably marriage and motherhood, except in the case of a religious virgin. The ideal of chastity even went beyond the limits of marriage, as is shown in a *Novella* by Justinian that praises as an ideal the woman who

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[355] Cf. Talbot 1997, 142-3.

[356] E.g. Beaucamp 1992, 368. Cf. Arjava 1996, 35, and Messis 2006, 617-21, 672-3.

[357] E.g. Beaucamp 1990, 110, 116-7. The severity continued in 8th-century law, e.g. *Ecloga*, 17.30. Cf. Laiou 1993, 120-1, and Messis 2006, 672, 704-5. See also Garland 1999, 15-16, on the many protective laws improving the situation of women issued by Justinian in particular.

[358] *Life of St. Mary / Marinos*, chapters 9-10.

[359] *Anth. Gr.* VI:59 (translation by W.R. Patton).

stays chaste and true to her husband even if the marriage ends in either death or divorce.[360] Such ideals asking widowed women to remain unmarried, often adding the argument 'for the sake of her children', are expressed in several laws.[361] This can be seen as a continuation of the old Roman ideal of a good woman being an *univira*.[362]

Traditional ideals of a good wife, which extended over social classes and through the centuries, also included, in addition to motherhood and good housekeeping, elements such as talent, beauty, some religious knowledge and piety.[363] Theodore of Stoudios claims that his mother, originally an illiterate orphan, taught herself to read the Psalms by the light of a lamp in the evenings and without neglecting her household tasks.[364] Whereas the above poem illustrates the ideals of the virtuous virgin, wife and mother, another poem by Agathias emphasises talent, beauty and even learning. It is a funeral poem for his sister Eugenia:

> The earth covers Eugenia who once bloomed in beauty and poesy,
> who was learned in the revered science of the law.
> On her tomb the Muse, Themis, and Aphrodite all shore their hair.[365]

There is also a funeral poem for Eugenia's husband, Agathias' brother-in-law.[366] It hints that there had been some sort of disagreement between the spouses, which might one reason why the frequently-referred-to virtue of being a good wife is passed over in Eugenia's funeral poem, which concentrates instead on aspects of learning and beauty. An emphasis on poetry and law is also suitable for a daughter of a *rhetor* and the sister of a lawyer such as Agathias. A certain degree of book learning was connected to the image of a good mother. Kazhdan notes that one stereotype presents the mother as the primary educator of both male and female children.[367]

Although such literary descriptions make use of poetic licence, they do show the ideal of womanhood and the virtues considered the most praiseworthy. They may display the ideal feminine, the model to strive for or simulate. Another feature is that many of the idealised pictures portray

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[360] *Nov*. 2 (AD 535), cf. also *Nov.* 22 (AD 536). Beaucamp 1990, 226-7.

[361] This issue is discussed by Beaucamp 1992, 349-50, for example.

[362] However, the traditional Roman *univira* was usually a wife dying before her husband, not a widow on whom there might have been social pressure to remarry, Arjava 1996, 167. Cf. Theod. Stoud., *Laudatio*, § 3, in which he praises his mother for knowing but one man (ἕνα ἄνδρα γνωρίσασα). See also Thurstone 1989, 10, 16-7.

[363] Cf. Garland 1988, 375, on Psellos' (11th c.) description of his mother: "The ideology of the middle-classes was clearly as strict as that of the aristocracy and probably more so, and Psellos, whose origins were hardly upper-class, gives us an ideal picture of the middle-class wife and mother, which must, however idealized, have seemed a credible portrait to his contemporaries. He describes an ideal woman, a saint incarnate, a good wife and a beloved mother, who fills woman's most important role. Theodote is talented, beautiful, educated in theology, an expert at all household tasks and a capable wife and mother."

[364] Theod. Stoud., *Laudatio*, § 3 (written between 797-802.).

[365] *Anth. Gr.* VII:593 (translation by W.R. Patton).

[366] *Anth. Gr.* VII:596.

[367] Kazhdan 1998, 11-12, 16. Cf. Theod. Stud, *Laudatio,* § 4, which refers to his mother as educating and bringing up her children, and *Vita Tarasii*, §6, mentioning that his mother guided him in virtue. The *Life of Sts. David, Symeon, and George of Lesbos*, 193, tells the story of two daughters of a rich widow who are equipped for life by the teachings and admonitions of their mother.

women related to the author. Despite the misogynous trends or slightly negative evaluations of the potential of the female nature expressed in some Byzantine sources, writers tend to idealise the women in their own family.[368] Perceived ideals may also be exposed through their antithesis. In the *Secret History*, which portrays Empress Theodora as a veritable 'anti-woman', Procopius also reveals his stand on what constitutes proper femininity and womanhood.[369]

In sum, the most important features of an ideal Byzantine woman seem to include accomplishments such as being a good mistress of a household and a mother, some level of talent and learning combined with piety expressed especially through religious reading, and also an attractive physical appearance, as beauty was a highly prized feature in Byzantine society. For the most part these definitions were, of course, created by the culturally dominant upper classes, but through their presentation via different media they affected general attitudes towards women and filtered downwards through the social layers. Such ideals affected both ideas on female behaviour in public and how women were depicted in public space.

Other models of ideal women were present in stories about female saints, for the most part, and were connected to the ideal of eternal virginity. Virtues such as piety, chastity and humility are accentuated in these, although some saints did not necessarily start out as a model of womanhood. Some of the early Byzantine texts on saints' lives, such as the one on Mary of Egypt, depict repentant prostitutes. Mary eventually repents of her sinful past and spends the rest of her days as an ascetic in the desert outside Jerusalem. Significant features of her story include her total abstinence from human comfort and severe asceticism, as a result of which her body became so meagre that it lost all traces of femininity. Years later, a monk meeting old Mary in the desert did not initially recognise her as a woman, only as an ascetic who had lived long in the desert.[370]

There is a somewhat similar account among John Moschos' stories. Two monks, on their way back from Mount Sinai to their monastery near Jerusalem, are temporarily lost in the desert and come upon the cave of a hermit. They find the ascetic deceased, and only on burying the body do they realise that this holy person was, in fact, a woman.[371] According to Saradi-Mendelovici, such stories in which the woman overcomes her 'natural' feminine weakness by means of asceticism was an old stereotype that assumed new forms in Christian texts.[372]

Another popular theme among the early *vitae* are stories about women disguising themselves as monks to pursue a spiritual life. Here again, the fact that their gender cannot be distinguished is

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[368] Cf. Hatlie 2009, 44, 48-50, who notes that narratives about mothers also tended to be used to express something about the offspring. See Messis 2006, 152-3, on the absolute positive image of the mother in Byzantine society in which approaches to the feminine were otherwise relatively conflicted.

[369] Brubaker 2005, 433-6.

[370] *Life of St. Mary of Egypt*, chapter 10-12. Cf. Kazhdan & Talbot 1991/1992, 403-4. Constantinou 2005, 59-89, also notes that the word harlot mainly designated a sexually immoral woman. Messis 2006, 698, quotes a Middle Byzantine text (*Kanonarion I*, ed. Arranz, 52), noting that Christian writers at the time did not define a woman as prostitute in the same way as in modern society. The exchange of money or other compensation was not the crucial factor, which was that the unmarried woman willingly and habitually slept with a variety of men.

[371] Moschos, *Prat.spir.,* 170.

[372] Saradi-Mendelovici 1991, 90-1.

part of the point. In fact, they are taken for eunuch monks on account of their beardlessness.[373] Casting off female sexuality and feminine features constitute an important part of the story both in the case of extreme asceticism and in the case of using the disguise of a monk. The bodily annihilation of female features was an ideal connected to the pursuit of spiritual purity. These women are becoming like men, or at least sexually neutral, which is a sign of their spiritual strength and the heights they have reached.[374] The Church was officially opposed to presentations that blended the sexes. It did not necessarily accept such expressions, women dressed as men especially, because this blurred the distinction between the genders and their differences could not be distinguish. The Church usually condemned cross-dressing,[375] but the popularity of these stories lived on.[376]

In some respects, these stories could be considered as negative stereotypes. They underlined the female feebleness of ordinary women, as the only way in which a woman could become worthy of sanctity was by surpassing her normal weak nature. She had to overcome her weaknesses and deny her sexuality and femininity, and only by becoming more like a man, or at least neutral in gender, could she achieve a higher level of purity and spirituality.[377] On the other hand, these stories also gave an alternative ideal which was detached from the female role of a good wife and mother. They proposed a substitute model with women of strong character who lived outside the stereotypical female role.[378] According to Messis society provided women with two different strategies, one for 'living in the world' and the other for 'living outside the world': the former offered salvation through motherhood, the latter through 'masculinisation' that transgresses the 'naturally weak' female nature.[379]

Approaching the middle Byzantine period there was a change in how female saints were presented in the hagiographies. Stories about women disguised as monks faded out, whereas stories about women reaching sanctity after having lived as wives, possibly also as mothers, before

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[373] E.g. *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapters 4-5. Herrin 1984, 179-80, Topping 2013, 216. Cf. Kazhdan & Talbot 1991/1992, 403-4, Talbot 1985, 10, Herrin 2001, 109-10, Messis 2006, 907-8. According to Sidéris 2003, 221-2, 224-5, a eunuch was not considered a totally non-sexual individual, and neither was there a guarantee of virtue. The fact that ascetic women were taken for eunuchs had a practical aspect in that they were beardless in a monastic society in which monks in general had beards, and they lacked general female features due to a rigorous ascetic way of living, therefore easily passing as eunuch monks. Wearing male clothing and being beardless did not suffice, however. See Ringrose 2003, 65, on the ambiguity of eunuchs and how it could be used by women disguising themselves as men. Cf. *Vita Tarasii,* § 66: some women dressed themselves as eunuchs so that they could approach the bishop's grave in a monastery for healing purposes even if women were barred.

[374] Cf. Talbot 1985, 10, Kazhdan & Talbot 1991/1992, 403-4, Herrin 1984, 179-80, Talbot 2001, 14-16, Patlagean 1976, 609, Casey 2013, 171-7, Topping 1988, 213, 216, 219. According to James 2009, 38, a series of female role models including the virgin, the transvestite, the repentant whore and the woman denying her husband, were originally sanctified by the early Church, but some of them were more part of a popular 'sub culture' and were later opposed by official Church policy to some extent.

[375] The local synod in Gangra ca. 340 AD condemned women who, in the name of asceticism, dressed in male clothing (*Gangra*, 13), and cross-dressing in general was condemned at the synod in AD 691/2, although referring mainly to carnival tradition (*Trullo*, 62).Cf. Saradi-Mendelovici 1991, 92-3, Topping 1988, 216, Herrin 1992, 102-3.

[376] Talbot 2001, 15-6.

[377] Cf. Sardi-Mendelovici 1991, 93-4, Talbot 1997, 118, Talbot 2001, 14-16, and Coole 1993, 44.

[378] Cf. Kazhdan & Talbot 1991/1992, 403-4, Casey 2013, 174-7, Topping 1988, 216-7, 222.

[379] Messis 2006, 144-5, 151, 267, 293-4, 312 note 586.

embracing a religious life increased in numbers.[380] This new type of female saint, again comparable with the Virgin Mary, was more in accord with current views of the Church. The change might also reflect the increased veneration of *Theotokos* and praise of the mother, mentioned above. There is a clear shift of focus in the *vitae* of female saints from the strict ascetic life of a hermit to women living in a religious community and embracing the spiritual life as nuns. As part of the explanation Saradi-Mendelovici suggests the fact that monasteries began to establish themselves in urban contexts, too.[381] The ascetic life slowly spread from the deserts into the towns, and a monastic life was no longer a choice only for the most zealous and most extreme seekers of spiritual purity. As Talbot notes, convents in Byzantium were primarily an urban phenomenon, usually located in cities rather than in the countryside.[382] In this way the latter type of stories about women ascending to sainthood through living an ascetic life in a convent after first having lived a normal female life in secular society may reflect trends and developments in society.[383]

Stavroula Constantinou noted some clear distinctions between male and female sainthood, as well as gender differences between male and female hagiographies. Female sainthood cannot be achieved through the same means as male holiness. Women are also portrayed in relation to men, whereas men tend to be depicted independently, and the women's sexual status is always central to the story. Exclusively female roles of sainthood are those of virgin, cross-dresser, pious wife and the mother of a saint.[384]

As Herrin remarks, Byzantine female saints tended to come from the upper strata of society, with only a few examples of women of humble origin.[385] Further, Talbot notes that far fewer woman than men became saints and that among hagiographies there are only a few written about female saints.[386] P. Halsall recognised a statistical decline in the number of new female saints from the 7th to the 15th centuries, only 25 of the 238 recognised new saints being women. The corresponding figures for the 6th century were 10 females from of a total of 47. The peak of female sainthood occurred in earlier centuries, declining rapidly towards the end of the Byzantine period.[387] Furthermore, the known number of female convents in any particular period was much smaller than the numbers of male monasteries.[388] An ascetic life was definitely an ideal put before women in the period under discussion. However, as scholars have pointed out, not all women could embrace a religious life and, in a way, these ideal women in the shape of saints also underlined notions of

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[380] Patlagean 1976, 617, Saradi-Mendelovici 1991, 94. Herrin 1984, 179-80, Talbot 2001, 14-6. Cf. Talbot 1994, 109-114, with examples from the middle Byzantine period.

[381] Saradi-Mendelovici 1991, 94. Cf. Talbot 1985, 4-5.

[382] Talbot 1985, 2, 4-5, and Talbot 1997, 138-9.

[383] Cf. Theodore of Stoudios' mother Theoktiste, who enters monastic life and also persuades most of her family to take monastic wows. Theod. Stoud., *Laudatio*, § 6 (PG 99, 889B-892B). Efthymiadis & Featherstone 2007, 15, 18, 20, Efthymiadis 2011, 101-2, and Garland 2013, 34.

[384] Constantinou 2004, 417-20.

[385] Herrin 1983, 72.

[386] Talbot 1994, 105, Talbot 2001, 14-6. Cf. Kazhdan & Talbot 1991/1992, 392-397 on the amount of male and female saints mentioned in the *Synaxarion* of Constantinople.

[387] Halsall 1999, 5-6, and Table 1:1.

[388] Talbot 1985, 2, 4-5, Talbot 1994, 105. Overview of monasticism in 6th-7th centuries, Hatlie 2002, 210-26.

female feebleness in emphasising the imperfection of women in general, compared to those who had overcome the weaknesses of their sex by striving for religious purity.

C. Traditional *topoi* on the female nature

There were two polar stereotypes: the Virgin Mary represented the highest degree of an ideal woman, whereas Eve was the ultimate stereotype concerning ideas about female nature and womankind in general.[389] Few sources are blatantly despiteful of women, but some early Byzantine authors occasionally expressed misogynistic opinions.[390] The presented attitude is rather that of a lacking trust in the strength and capability of the female nature. The anonymous writer of the *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, for example, puts the following prayer in the mouth of the holy woman giving thanks for the Lord's strength and assistance, without which "it is impossible for men to accomplish any good thing, and especially for women, who are easily disposed through weakness to evil's diversion."[391] Church Fathers could present a bleak opinion of women, their capability and spiritual strength, which they paired with the weakness of Eve, who had neither the strength nor the wisdom to resist temptation and therefore was the instigator of original sin.[392]

The feebleness of the female sex is a *topos* that occurs in various sources from legal texts[393] and sermons of Church Fathers to hagiographies and poetry. It is an old theme that has its roots in Antiquity.[394] Many scholars refer to this perception of female weakness and feebleness.[395] Saradi-Mendelovici points out the double definition of female feebleness in religious texts: feebleness of the body[396] and moral feebleness. She considers that one reason for the continued use of this *topos* in literary sources is that it kept having a base in social reality, reflecting social models.[397] It should be borne in mind, however, that her main concern is with the middle and late Byzantine period. Beaucamp, focusing on the 4th to the 7th centuries, devotes a whole chapter of her study on women in imperial law to the discourse of their feebleness.[398] In fact, the issue is central to her whole study

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[389] Cf. e.g. Herrin 1983, 64, Herrin 1984, 182-3, Wyke 1989, 130, Talbot 1997, 117, 142, Talbot 2001, 1, Messis 2006, 151, 267, 293-4, 312 note 586, and James 2009, 35, 37-8. See also LePorte 1982, 152-5.

[390] On conflicting and ambivalent tendencies in views of the female nature inherited from Late Antiquity, see e.g. Arjava 1996, 231-3. See Herrin 1992, 105, on polar opinions of women as a source of innocence or temptation, either corruptible or corrupting. Cf. Messis 2006, 567-80, 649-50.

[391] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge,* chapter 5 (translation by J. Featherstone). Cf. Coole 1993, 44-6, Talbot 1996, x.

[392] Cf. Cameron 1989b, 186, 190, and Talbot 2001, 1, on early Christian writers perceiving Eve as the cause of the fall of man and the symbol of evil, which is seen as inherent in women and only neutralised by the Virgin Mary.

[393] E.g. *Dig.* 23.2.42 on women's easily influenced nature, naivety and proneness to error. Cf. Beaucamp 1990, 308.

[394] See e.g. Coole 1993, 4, 28-33, and Saradi-Mendelovici 1991, 87, on the influence of Plato and Aristotle on later perceptions of gender division and explanatory reasons for female subjugation under the male.

[395] E.g. Talbot 2001, 14-5, Herrin 1984, 68-9, Beaucamp 1992, 280-283, Messis 2006, 257, 307, 311-2.

[396] Cf. Messis 2006, 166-75: a comprehensive section on medical and philosophical perceptions of male versus female physiognomy in Byzantine literature (with roots in antiquity), describing the female body as an incomplete male body, or with similar but introverted sexual organs instead of the extroverted male genitals. The female body is also considered the weaker vessel, or more passive.

[397] Saradi-Mendelovici 1991, 87, 91. Cf. Beaucamp 1992, 323.

[398] Beaucamp 1990, 11-16. Cf. Beaucamp 1992, 280-2.

on the position of women in early Byzantine society, in which she examines how this assumed feebleness caused both legal restrictions and protection with regards to women.[399]

Linked to the *topos* of female feebleness is the traditional stereotypical view of female passivity. Beaucamp notes that laws seem to take for granted female incapability actively to initiate grave crimes and they presume an inherent passive nature in women.[400]

Upon closer inspection the situation is more varied and not all sources present women as weak and feeble, even if this is a frequent *topos*. Not all authors associated Eve with female weakness or underlined her fall into temptation. There were other uses of biblical imagery when it suited the purposes of the writer. Messis points out that there are two versions of the human-creation story in the Old Testament, giving complementary bases for a theological discourse of the relationship between the sexes. The first one briefly states that God created humans, man and woman, in His image, thereby creating an opening for an interpretation in which an equal position is given to both sexes. The second, longer narrative describes Eve as having been created from the rib of Adam, in this way sharing the same flesh but giving man precedence over woman.[401] Corippus, for example, presents Adam and Eve together in command of creation in his poem honouring the imperial accession of Justin II to the throne.[402] This serves his purpose regarding the text, in which Justin's wife, Empress Sophia, is honoured alongside the Emperor.[403] In portraying Adam and Eve together as the crown of creation he could symbolically compare these Biblical ancestors with the new imperial couple heading the state.

Imbedded in the Byzantine heritage was yet another view of the female, which to some extent promoted a certain level of a broader equality with the male half of humanity. Diana Coole notes that already Plato held the opinion that there was no large difference in mental or spiritual capacities between the sexes, and that what there was could be bridged by education. This does not mean that Plato all-and-all had a higher opinion of women than his contemporaries: he still professed views that saw women as weak, emotional, complaining and lacking in virtue, and as best suited to the domestic sphere.[404] Nevertheless, such alternative views stemming from the Hellenistic tradition found their way into Christian thought, possibly best exemplified in St. Paul's famous statement that there is neither male nor female, for all are one in Christ.[405] John of Ephesus, in fact, quotes this passage in the 6th century in his *Lives of Eastern Saints* when he provides reasons for the inclusion of some holy women among the stories of holy men.[406] It is worth pointing out that St. Paul assigns a submissive role to women in many other instances and he was as ambivalent in his attitude towards

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[399] Beaucamp 1990 and 1992 *passim*. Cf. Garland 1999, 15-16, and Arjava 1996, 243, on protective measures in Justinian's legislation.

[400] See Beaucamp 1990, 16, on sentiments e.g. in. *Just.* 9.13.1 (2), and *Just*. 5.17.8 (2) & (3).

[401] *Genesis* 1.27 and 2.21-24. Messis 2006, 256-9.

[402] Corippus, *In laud.* II:20ff.

[403] On the representation of Sophia in Corippus' poem, see Cameron 1976. See also the discussion, 176-7.

[404] Coole 1993, 20.

[405] NT *Gal.* 3:28.

[406] John of Ephesus, *Lives*, chapters 12 & 27 (6th century) (Brock & Ashbrook Harvey, 1987, 124, 134).

women as Plato and any other Antique or Late Antique pagan or Christian writer.[407] The Church Fathers tended to hold the view that the separate tasks and responsibilities of men and women were proper to their respective natures, although they frequently combined it with ideas of some degree of equality in terms of the soul and on a spiritual level. The statement that "the husband is the head, the wife the body" is often repeated, putting men in charge and women in an inferior position.[408] At the same time, the equal importance of the different tasks assigned to the sexes is frequently professed as is the equal possibility of attaining spiritual purity.[409] However, for women this tended to mean that they had to overcome their femininity and the 'weakness of their sex', in other words becoming more 'like men' in their spiritual struggle. As ascetics they could, at least in theory, be considered equals in many respects, and are presented as such in some hagiographies, for example.[410]

There existed thus an alternative model, according to which women, theoretically at least, had the capacity to equal men on a mental and a spiritual level. Such views of a certain equality occasionally even extended to more material meditations in the early Byzantine period. As Messis points out, the 6th-century writer Cosmas Indicopleustes interpreted the story of human creation as man only preceding woman in time, but not surpassing her in nature, as they both were of the same flesh.[411] Some laws admitted to equal, albeit different, functions for the sexes with regard to the procreation of new citizens, as they saw women being as important as men in this respect, and further also applied uniform rules for male and female descendants.[412] Beaucamp notes tendencies in Justinian's *Novellae* in particular to present women as equal to men, at least as creations of God and in some respects as wives and mothers, seeing them as the other half of a partnership or in parenting. She is also of the opinion that this equality is restricted to the religious sphere and to women's equal importance in the formation of the family.[413]

Totally opposite to the *topos* of the feeble, weak and passive woman, and even the spiritually equal ascetic who had overcome the weakness of her gender, was another stereotypical image, that of the active, dangerous, cunning and knowledgeable temptress. Again, Eve was a useful effigy for this view of feminine nature, as she could be portrayed as a temptress.[414] Other traditional symbols

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[407] E.g. 1 *Cor*. 11:3, *Col.* 3:18-19, and 1*Tim*. 2:11-15. See Messis 2006, 144-5, 151, 254, 256-9, 264-6, 270-3, for further discussion and related topics. Cf. also Herrin 1992, 105, Casey 2013, 174, and Laiou 2000, 73.

[408] Chrys., *Homily* 20, Basileus, *Herewith.* 73:2, 3. Similar thoughts are expressed in the NT, 1 *Cor*. 11:3, and *Ef*. 5:22-28. Cf. Beaucamp 1992, 291-2, 322, and Beck 1986, 56, 59.

[409] E.g. Chrys., *How to*. p. 96, Chrys.*, Virg*. XLVI.5, LXXIII.1, Chrys.*, Against rem.* 4, Basileus, *Intr*. 2. Cf. Messis 2006, 270-2.

[410] Saradi-Mendelovici 1991, 90-91. She also compares the Christian version of a 'female heroine', the female ascetic, with some female heroines in ancient literature, seeing it partly as a recast remnant of earlier models. Cf. Chrys., *Virg*. XLVII.1, Kazhdan & Talbot 1991/1992, 403, Beck 1986, 61, and Casey 2013, 171-7.

[411] Messis 2006, 257. Cosmas Indicopleustes *Topogr. Christiania*, ed. Woska-Conus, v. III, 47. *Genesis* 2.21-24.

[412] E.g. *Inst*. 2.13.5, states: "no difference should exist between males and females in the exercise of this right because each sex equally performs its respective function in the procreation of the human race /---/ a simple and uniform rule both for sons and daughters and other persons descending through the male sex, whether born at the time or subsequently", and *Nov.* 18 c. 4 (536). Cf. Beaucamp 1992, 291-2.

[413] Beaucamp 1990, 25. Cf. Kazhdan & Talbot 1991/1992, 403.

[414] Cf. Talbot 1997, 117-8, 142-3. Messis 2006, 151-2, 293-4, 320-2, discusses an alternative division between the

of this *topos* of the dangerous nature of womanhood, frequently associated with female sexuality, include figures from classical tales such as Helen of Troy and Circe. The Late Antique poet Palladas of Alexandria, for example, makes use of the story of Ulysses and Circe, whom he sees as a cunning courtesan who strips men of their human senses.[415] Female sexuality was problematic and often considered dangerous, or at least a reason for restriction, trouble or caution.[416] The author of the *Life of St. Stephen the Younger,* wishing to give a negative portrayal of Emperor Constantine V, calls him 'a slave of women', and Procopius expresses similar contempt for the general Belisarius' passion for his wife Antonina.[417] Agathias, for his part, reflects in a poem against homosexuality, that at least it "is a small evil to love women, for gracious Nature gave them the gift of amorous dalliance".[418]

Saradi-Mendelovici notes the cultural ambivalence towards women, presented as feeble and in need of protection on the one hand and as dangerous, knowledgeable and seductive on the other, but she discards it as an ambiguity within the Byzantine civilisation mainly constituting a primal part of human nature.[419] With a view to finding a more acute explanation of this phenomenon, I would argue that one reason for this contradictory imagery could be found in the different aspects of the duality of men and women, one focussing on sex, the other on gender. Whereas both sex and gender in some ways may be considered cultural categories, sex is connected to the biological male-female division that relates to procreation and sexuality whereas gender is the cultural elaboration of sex, connecting attitudes regarding social behaviour, human nature and so forth to the biological categories.[420] Through her sex and sexuality a woman could be perceived as dangerous, a temptress capable of manipulation and of exercising power over men, whereas the female gender was assumed to be feeble, easily influenced and in need of protection. This dual attitude is not limited to Byzantine society: both *topoi* existed in ancient traditions and continue into modernity.[421]

Whereas the Virgin Mary represented an ideal, Eve represented general ideas about womanhood, embodying several traditional *topoi* on the female nature. She represented the notion of women as weak, feeble and lacking the strength to resist temptation, as well as the image of women as dangerous and as temptresses. These *topoi* had roots way back in pagan traditions. Ideals (such as virginity, motherhood and industriousness within the domestic sphere) and ideas about the female nature (such as weakness, feebleness, naivety and being easily seduced on the one hand and as sexually dangerous on the other) had by tradition both in the end give male-dominated societies

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domestic or domesticated versus the exotic woman, the 'a-sexual' and the 'super-sexual'.

[415] *Anth. Gr.* X:50 (Palladas of Alexandria, 3th /4th c.). Palladas has recently been dated to ca. 259-340. His work was included in an anthology in the late 4th century. Interest in classical epigrams continued to the end of the 6th century, after which it faded out. See Al. Cameron 1993, 80-1, 92-3, 329, and Wilkinson 2009, 41, 49-51.

[416] Cf. Talbot 1997, 118, Saradi-Mendelovici 1991, 97, Messis 2006, 293-4, 452-4, and Beaucamp 1992, 323.

[417] *Life of St. Stephan the Younger*, ch. 65 (ed. Auzépy, 167, 266). Procopius, *Anecd.* 4.13.

[418] *Anth. Gr.* X:68. (Agathias Scholasticus, 6th c.)

[419] Saradi-Mendelovici 1991, 97.

[420] Cranny-Francis et al. 2003, 1-7. See also the discussion in Chapter I.B, 16-7.

[421] Cf. Cranny-Francis et al. 2003, 120, in which the term 'patriarchal stereotypes' is used with regard to modern cultural output: she concludes that "images are almost invariably constituted in terms of patriarchal stereotypes - women as weak, helpless, caring and nurturing, or alternatively as betraying, vicious and corrupt."

reasons to specify legal rules or moral codes with the intent either to protect women or to direct their behaviour. Nevertheless, there were also signs of more egalitarian trends.[422]

Legislation and social codes constitute the ideological setting within which women's social behaviour and appearance in public space has to be considered. This is not to say, that women themselves did not, in every sense, embrace the same ideals and ideas as declared by the male part of society. Nothing points to anything other than that women usually embraced these general ideas about the feminine to the same degree as men did, as they were brought up within the same ideological framework.[423] Their behaviour and actions did not necessarily always concur in everyday life and praxis, however, with these generally held ideas.

D. Juridical regulations, exclusion and safeguarding

One of the major objectives of ancient legislation was to protect property and its lawful transmission between individuals, and to regulate ownership. Such concerns produced a range of juridical stipulations concerning not only selling and buying, but also matters such as inheritance and the question of legal heirs. From this sprang directives on matters such as marriage, divorce and guardianship over children.[424] Another important function of the law was to regulate the relationship between the individual (the citizen or the subject) on the one hand and the state (the government and its administration) on the other, which led to regulations regarding fiscal matters, citizenship, civil rights and individual rights, as well as an individual's duties and relationship with administrative institutions. Both these aspects of the law, combined with ideological views on gender and the female sex, produced certain stipulations that were particular for women and for their relationship with public life. Ideas on female feebleness as well as moral aspects, thoroughly dealt with by Beaucamp, were occasionally taken as justification for laws that either limited the actions of women or were meant to give them special protection.[425]

Religious establishments also played their part in creating a normative framework for the appropriate behaviour for individuals in society. Normative texts deriving from a religious sphere included the canons of ecumenical or local Church councils. The aim in these cases was to regulate the individual's relationship with God and the Church hierarchy, as well as moral aspects of life.[426] Combined with religious ideology and views on womanhood this gave rise to some specific

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[422] Cf. Kazhdan & Talbot 1991/1992, 403, mentioning the traditional legal perception of female incapacity and being in need of protection, but also noting a "slow introduction of women's rights, especially expanding the mother's right toward her children or the protection of women's dowries"; also Garland 1999, 15-16, on how Justinian legislation also improved the position of women through the introduction of protective measures regarding female property or the treatment of her person, for example.

[423] As an example, Anna Comnena (11th century) conforms as much as any male writer with dominant stereotypes and contemporary ideas about womanhood and proper female behaviour. See e.g. Garland 1988, 391-2. There is no comparable material by female writers from the period studied here, but there is no reason to assume any great difference in this respect.

[424] Cf. Arjava 1996, 3. Scott 2012b, 9-11, notes that Justinian I put much effort into legislation on marriage and divorce throughout most of his reign. See also Giardina 2000, 392-402.

[425] Beaucamp 1990 *passim*.

[426] See e.g. Gallagher 2008, *passim,* for a short overview.

regulations concerning women and their behaviour.

A poem written by Palladas of Alexandria in the 3rd / 4th centuries paraphrases a verse by Meander on women and then applies the same attitude to slaves: " 'Nothing is worse than a woman, even a good one', and nothing is worse than a slave, even a good one /—/ ".[427] Palladas tended to have a rather misogynist attitude, which is not necessarily exhibited in 6th-century poetry, but his poem illustrates the occasional mental pairing of women and slaves in the same category. Women are also paired with slaves in some law texts, as in the prohibition concerning civic employment. It is noteworthy that the prohibition of both women and slaves is attributed to tradition. The law explicitly stated that it is not due to any deficiency in judgement or any other natural cause, such as a physical limitation, creating an impediment, as is the case with the deaf and the mute.[428] Their positions had some similarities. Slaves always and women in many cases had no legal personal independence and were under the *potestas* of someone. For women this usually meant her father, a guardian or her husband. There were also, of course, many differences. Whereas a slave was considered a commodity of his or her master, a free woman was still considered a citizen, although with a circumscribed role in public life.

By tradition women were excluded from civic life and public administration, which the Justinian law code clearly stated.[429] This was the case from Antiquity to the Late Antique Roman Empire.[430] A woman was not considered an active citizen who could partake in public affairs and administration, she was seen more as a passive subject. Although this fact remained unchanged, the intellectual explanations for it varied. Sometimes female exclusion was simply attributed to tradition,[431] although more elaborate ideological arguments connected to social views on gender differences were usually used. As discussed earlier, the idea existed that gender differences were a natural state of affairs, man being the stronger part and woman the weaker, and therefore it was seen as natural that public affairs belonged to the role of men in the same way as the domestic domain was the sphere of women.[432] Other explanations focused on the supposed feebleness of women and therefore either considered them unfit for public activities because of their inferiority or reasoned that they had to be protected from the strain that public life involved. There was also the moral argument that female modesty, which required that women did not associate too freely with men outside the family, made it unsuitable for them to partake in public life.[433] The explanations differed, but they underlined the same idea that women were not supposed to actively take part in official

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[427] *Anth. Gr.* XI:286. For new dates on Palladas' life (ca. 259-340), see Wilkinson 2009, 49-51.

[428] *Dig.* 5.1.12 (2). Cf. Beaucamp 1990, 34, Arjava 1996, 233-4.

[429] E.g. *Dig*. 2.13.12, *Dig*. 3.1.1 § 5, *Dig.* 50.4.3 § 3, *Dig.* 50.17.2*, Just.* 2.13.18. Cf. Beaucamp 1977, 149.

[430] Cf. John Chrysostom, *PG* 51, 231 (4th century), regarding women, that "she cannot give her opinion in the assembly, but she can give her opinion in the household" (author's translation).

[431] As e.g. the above-mentioned *Dig.* 5.1.12 (2) or *Dig.* 2.13.12, which simply states: "it is held that women are excluded from conducting banking business, as this is an occupation belonging to men".

[432] Cf. *Dig.* 1.9.1, which mentions "the greater dignity attached to the male sex" and *Inst.* 2.8, which mentions "the weakness peculiar to the female sex", ideas echoed in theological literature. Such forms of naturalisation are discussed in Chapter I.B, 14-6.

[433] E.g. *Dig.* 2.1.1 (5), on the prohibition of women from appearing for others in law cases, the reasons being "to prevent them from interfering in the cases of others, contrary to what is becoming the modesty of their sex, and in order that women may not perform duties which belong to men".

public affairs.

As with those who were not yet of age, there were many civic functions a woman could not take on nor could she execute the office of a magistrate or the curia.[434] Women were also excluded from all judiciary vocations.[435] In commerce, they were barred from the profession of a banker.[436] On the other hand, they could still be required to shoulder some inherited or personal charges in the form of certain *munera* (obligations to provide or finance public works), but the law excluded any responsibilities unsuited to their sex, such as those requiring personal physical input. However, a woman could be asked to put some of her fortune at the disposal of the community.[437] A woman from an aristocratic family and with personal wealth might inherit or hold influential posts, usually in an honorary way with a male deputy acting for her. In 553, for example, Flavia Gabrielia, served as *logistēs*, *prohedros* and "father of the city" in the area of Oxyrhynchite in Egypt.[438]

There were also restrictions on women's involvement in legal cases and the kind of legal actions they were allowed to take. They were prohibited from bringing civil charges for the case of another party, the exception being some motions for her children under legal age if their father was dead. They could not be granted a licence to act for another person, as a procurator. They were even limited in taking legal action in criminal cases for other persons, except in a few instances such as the murder or enslavement of a close relative, or in certain offences of a public nature when it was in the interests of the state, such as high treason or denouncing someone regarding the *annona* (food provisioning). The law also prohibited women from acting as witnesses to testaments.[439] There were even some limitations on a woman acting as a witness in court if she had been convicted as an adulteress or was a prostitute, for example. The principal idea was that a woman was only allowed to take legal action in her own proper cause.[440] On the other hand, there are court cases indicating that a husband could legally intervene on behalf of his wife, even without any specifically issued mandate from her. Again, one rationalisation for this was that honourable women should be protected from having to enter public and male-dominated law courts.[441] Nevertheless, there was no law explicitly prohibiting them from being present.[442] A woman could always initiate actions in cases concerning her own affairs,[443] but provisions were made so that reputable women could avoid the public space of law courts.

Female exclusion from public office and moral restrictions regarding male space can be

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[434] *Dig.* 50.17.2., pr., *Just.* 10.35.3. Cf. Beaucamp 1990, 29-31.

[435] *Dig.* 5.1.12 (2), *Just.* 2.55.6. Cf. Beaucamp 1990, 34.

[436] *Dig.* 2.13.12. Cf. Beaucamp 1990, 35, and Arjava 1996, 249.

[437] Beaucamp 1990, 31-34, and Arjava 1996, 144, 249-53. Cf. Sironen 1997, 258-61, no. 226, and 404, with an epitaph from 5th/6th century. See Paiania in Attica for Euphemia the Intendent (μειζοτέρα).

[438] *P.Oxy.* 36.2780, lines 6-8. The obligation was presumably part of her patrimony and her duties were executed by her deputy Chrostophoros. Ruffini 2008, 56, 74, 78.

[439] *Dig.* 28.1.20 (6). Cf. Beaucamp 1990, 45, and Arjava 1996, 237.

[440] Beaucamp 1990, 35-45, and Arjava 1996, 234, 237.

[441] Beaucamp 1998, 133-4, who discussed some court cases from the 4th to the 7th century.

[442] Beaucamp 1998, 144. Cf. Arjava 1996, 236.

[443] Cf. e.g. *Nov.* 2.1, which was induced by a legal dispute between the widow Gregoria and her daughter regarding the father's estate. Humfress 2005, 173-4.

compared with ecclesiastic rules. The only position for women among Church offices, at least from the 6th century onwards, was that of a deaconess, the importance of which seemed to diminish over time.[444] On a spatial level, Taft notes: "there is no real restrictive canonical legislation concerning where women can go in church - there is in fact remarkably little juridical evidence of spaces in church forbidden to women - and what they can or cannot do while there."[445] There were some restrictions connected to ritual purity, such as not entering a church building during the menstrual period. Otherwise women could move freely in the ecclesiastic space, except from entering the sanctuary and altar area, where only deaconesses and, on occasion, nuns were allowed and which was also prohibited for male lay persons. Early Christian writers were against women attending night vigils, considering it improper for them to attend church at night in the presence of men, but it is evident from hagiographies and other sources that such recommendations were not strictly followed and over time lost practical effect.[446] The only clear exceptions were monasteries and convents. Both secular legislation and Church canons purported to prevent contact between the sexes inside monasteries. It should be noted, however, that this went both ways: women were restricted in entering male monasteries, but men were equally restricted in entering the female religious space of a convent.[447]

In most other respects, women were treated like any other citizen. They could legally own property and freely transfer this property in different ways.[448] They were responsible for their own actions and consequently were prosecuted and punished for crimes in the same way as men. They were not excluded from society, although they were exempted from partaking in the official affairs of the state, the administration and its institutions. Women were usually included in the category of men (as in mankind)[449] and were therefore responsible under the same laws as men,[450] except

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444 The deaconess played an important role at the baptism of women, but as the practice of baptising children became increasingly more common, her role shifts more towards an office for church charity and similar functions. E.g. Cardman 1999, 312-9, Herrin 1984, 179-20, and Saradi-Mendelovici 1991, 92-3. The order of deaconess is discussed more fully in Chapter III.D, 134-5.

445 Taft 1998, 72, 79-80, 87. On the question of assigning certain church areas to women, Taft notes that the concept of order in society with "everyone keeping to their place" was as important a factor as decorum and safety, and not all limitations should be interpreted exclusively as gender-discriminating. Factors such as class, age, civil status and even safety concerns were cause for some of the segregation.

446 Taft 1988, 72-3. E.g. Theod. Stoud, *Laiudatio* § 4 (written between 797-802), mentions that his mother never missed the midnight office.

447 *Nov.* 133 c. 3, c. 5 (rep. in *Ecloga Bas.* 4.1.17, 19-20) from AD 539. Prohibitions include corpses for burial. Exceptions were priests and gravediggers, who were permitted in convents for burials, as even there, women depended on men to perform some tasks. *Trullo*, 47 (691/2) prohibits persons of the opposite sex from spending the night in a monastery or convent. Later the prohibition became stricter. Canon 18 of *Nicaea II* (787) ruled that women were not allowed to visit monasteries under any circumstances. Cf. Talbot 1998, 114, Herrin 1992, 102, Herrin 2013, 123. Canons also stipulated that a cleric was not to visit a church widow or a church virgin alone. Beaucamp 1992, 354, notes with regard to the 4th - 6th centuries a congruity between canonical and imperial law regarding sacred virgins and deaconesses, both concerned with protecting the moral of women consecrated to God.

448 Cf. Talbot 1997, 119, Talbot 1994, 106, and Herrin 2013, 3.

449 Cf. Messis 2006, 155-6, noting that the word ἄνθρωπος (man) often denotes both men and women, as in mankind, while ἄρρην or ἀνήρ signifies man and the male, and θέυ or γυνή woman or the female.

450 E.g. a statement in *Nov.* 18 c. 5: "in accordance with nature neither do We ascribe one rule for women and another for men". See also Arjava 1996, 230.

regarding particular civic duties or issues related to *potestas*. Even so, ideals related to womanhood and proper female behaviour, as well as to their special role as child-bearers and providers of heirs, led to the occasional provision of special legal conditions regarding women.

Some laws offered special protection to women, but as Beaucamp points out, notions of incapacity and protection are affiliated in some respects and cannot always be separated, at least not in the intentions of early lawmakers.[451] The main component of the argumentation in Justinian law seemed to lie in the protection of women and their assets. Laws gave them financial security by protecting their property. Female property, especially the dowry, was usually better protected than male property. [452] Women were also to be protected from their own weakness. One law states that some limitations are justified "especially, as a great number of women are even found to favour opinions contrary to their own interests."[453] Accordingly, a husband could not dispose of the dowry even with his wife's consent, as she might out of weakness agree to an action that was not in her interest.[454] The dowry could be confiscated only in cases such as high treason, poisoning, assassination or patricide.[455] However, there were laws limiting this protection to women of the Orthodox faith, excluding heretics.[456] Justinian law also made it more or less impossible for a woman to become a guarantor for her husband.[457]

Women were juridically prevented in several respects from using their fortune to intervene on behalf of others. This was to prevent them from being exploited due to ignorance, and within certain limits they could be excused for ignorance of the law given that they were not supposed to have knowledge of more intricate legal details. A transaction made by a woman could therefore be annulled. As Beaucamp notes, women themselves could use the *topos* of feebleness in their favour, and indeed there were also laws to prevent the misuse of such an excuse. So as not to make it impossible for women to function financially given that the risk of an annulment might make people reluctant to make transactions with them, there were also exceptions through which this protection was cancelled.[458] One therefore has to suppose that women mostly took part in economic life in a normal manner. The main point of many of the protective laws and provisions was to secure the woman's fortune not only for her, but also and especially for her children, as her heirs.[459] According to Herrin, one essential evolving role for women in Byzantium was related to the legal transmission

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[451] Beaucamp 1990, 71, 77.

[452] E.g. *Dig*. 4.4.9 (2), *Dig*. 4.4.48 (2), *Dig*. 48.20.3, 10. Laws protecting a woman's dowry are, e.g. *Dig*. 3.4.3 (5), *Dig*. 3.5.35, *Dig*. 4.4.3 § 5, *Dig*. 10.2.20 (8) & 44 (7), *Dig*. 17.2.81, *Dig*. 23.3, *Dig*. 33.4, *Dig*. 41.9, *Dig*. 50.16.240, *Just*. 5.12.29, *Just*. 8.18.12, *Just*. 9.6.5 (3). Cf. Arjava 1996, 60, 134.

[453] *Just.* 5.1.4.

[454] E.g. *Inst*. 2.8, *Dig*. 2.4.22, *Dig*. 16.1.2 (2) & 4 (1), *Just*. 2.45.2 (1). Cf. White 1982, 539, Arjava 1996, 60. Kazhdan & Talbot, 1991/1992, 403, on increased protection of the dowry from the 6th century onwards.

[455] Dig. 48.20.3, cf. White 1982, 542-3.

[456] E.g. *Just.* 1.5.1, *Nov.* 109 c. 1.

[457] Beaucamp 1990, 54-78.

[458] Beaucamp 1990, 79-92. Cf. Arjava 1996, 237-41. Saradi-Mendelovici 1991, 88-9, gives later examples of requirements to have a woman informed about her legal rights and educated about legal matters concerning the transaction, to prevent her from using the excuse of ignorance to rescind a financial transaction.

[459] On safeguarding the dowry and the bridal gift for children see e.g. *Dig.* 31.1.34 (7), *Nov*. 2 chapters 1 & 2, *Nov*. 22 chapter 20 (2), *Nov.* 98, *Nov*. 117 chapters 8 & 9, and the property of both parents e.g. in *Just.* 8.58.2.

of property, as they played an important part in the accumulation and disposal of family property through the dowry and its strong legal safeguard in financial matters.[460] As Antti Arjava notes, Justinian I finally guaranteed intestate inheritance equally through paternal and maternal family lines, thus in one way giving equal recognition of male and female parentage.[461]

Considering the position of women as being vulnerable, lawmakers found their social, moral and physical protection equally important. Laws protected women from being pressured into marriage by men to whom they might have a legal or social obligation, while other legislation aimed to protect them from rape. A provincial administrator was prohibited from marrying a woman from the province in which he was stationed as long as he held office there, for example, and a tutor was prohibited from marrying his protégée. All this was to prevent people from using their position of power, by means of influence or pressure, to force a woman or her family to agree to a marriage.[462]

From the time of Justinian onwards the law protected all categories of women, including liberated women and slaves, against rape and abduction. The earlier prohibition preventing the marrying-off of a woman to her ravisher remained.[463] One reason for this was to prevent that a girl by consenting to elopement achieved a marriage which her parents or guardian had prohibited. Justinian legislation made some changes which meant that the woman was exempted from sanctions even if she did not resist properly but tolerated the abduction, not putting any fault on her. The entire blame and the punishment fell on the ravisher, who even was under the threat of death penalty for such an assault. Rape was considered particularly severe if the victim was an unmarried maiden, which is comprehensible in a society that placed great importance on the virginity of a bride.[464] Equally offensive was the ravishing of church virgins and nuns, and if women living a religious life were in question even nonviolent seduction was equal to rape.[465] This also worked the other way round. A law from 535 prohibited a deaconess from living with any man, even a close relative, and if a woman consecrated to God abandoned her path of life and took a husband she could, in the harshest scenario, be condemned to death, her fortune being confiscated and given to either the church or the convent with which she was associated.[466] On a moral scale, therefore, the civil status of a woman affected the gravity of the crime.

Adultery was another crime that positioned women differently from men. Legally, although not always morally, a husband could have sexual relationships outside of marriage without it being regarded as a crime of adultery, as long as the woman in question was not another man's wife. This

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460 Herrin 1984, 177.

461 Arjava 1996, 96, 107-8. E.g. *Just.* 6.55.12, 6.56.7, *Inst.* 3.1.16, 3.3, *Nov*. 22, chapter 47 (2), *Nov.* 118 (543). Cf. Laiou 2009, 57, on property descending through both male and female lines.

462 E.g. *Dig.* 23.3.36, 38 pr., 59, 63 (2), 65 (1), 67. Beaucamp 1990, 92-105. Cf. *Just.* 9.10.1, Arjava 1996, 237-43, 255. Garland 1999, 15-16, on how Justinian legislation in particular was concerned with the protection of women and their rights, both financially and socially.

463 *Just.* 9.13, *Nov.* 143 pr. Beaucamp 1990, 114-8. Cf. *Trullo,* 92. Laiou 1993, 111, 114, 116, 125-6, 135.

464 Beaucamp 1990, 107-121, and Arjava 1996, 38-9.

465 *Nov.* 123 c. 43, repeated in *Ecloga Bas.* 4.1.15. Beaucamp 1990, 118-20, and Leontsini 1989, 180-1.

466 *Nov.* 6. chapter 6 (535). Beaucamp 1990, 183-4. Earlier Church canons were not as severe, but the *Council of Chalcedon* (451), canons 15 & 16, decree anathema on a deaconess who married and exclusion from communion for a consecrated virgin who married after her consecration. Cf. *Trullo*, 30 (691/2). Beaucamp 1992, 354. On different types of women living a consecrated religious life see Chapter III.D.

was fornication (*porneia*), which unlike adultery (*moicheia)* was not directly punishable under the law.[467] Church canons from the end of the 7th century did not limit adultery to sexual relations with a married woman but condemned as an adulterer even a man marrying the fiancée of another man who was still alive.[468] Within a marriage, therefore, it was only the wife who could commit this crime and the husband was seen as the offended party, although on a moral level fidelity was increasingly advocated for both parties: in two marriage contracts preserved on papyri, for example, the husband promises not to have any other woman than his wife.[469] Interestingly, these documents are from the 6th century and not earlier, possibly reflecting the increasing opinion, probably influenced by the Church, that fidelity in marriage should concern both partners. The inequality in secular law was noted among Church fathers.[470] Furthermore, a 7th-century Church canon condemns both men and women who separate themselves from their spouses and marry other people as adulterous.[471] The law regarding sexual morals also became stricter for men in the 8th century: fornication (*porneia*) now became punishable being harsher if the man was married, less so if he was not, although the difference between fornication and adultery remained.[472]

Adultery was paralleled with murder and rape in Justinian legislation. According to an old legal tradition, the father of the woman was in theory allowed to kill both lover and daughter if the couple was caught, although this only applied if they were intercepted without doubt in the act itself.[473] In cases of mere suspicion of adultery or when the evidence was circumstantial the law was more cautious and even the husband was limited in his possibilities to take action against his wife: as long as she was married she could not be legally charged with adultery and the husband had to divorce her before even he could present any such accusations.[474] The argument for such legal protection was to prevent the disturbance of a marriage without good cause and to avoid that ill fame tarnished a married woman. The desire for stability and the conservation of marriage seems to have grown stronger in Justinian's law texts, which, in a way, made them somewhat more lenient towards the adulteress. The sentence for adulteresses in a text from 556 is tempered in comparison with the

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[467] E.g. Beaucamp 1990, 139-41, Beaucamp 1992, 342-7, 359, Arjava 1996, 202-3, 217, Laiou 1993, 111, 113-6, 118, 120-1, 128-9, 132. Cf. *Trullo*, 4 (691/2), forbidding a relationship with a married woman.

[468] *Trullo*, 98 (691/2). As Messis 2006, 670-2, 698-701, notes, 8th-century law assimilated several categories of women into juridical stipulations on adultery, equating sexual relationship with nuns, virgins, underaged girls, fiancées of other men, relationships with both a mother and a daughter, and incest.

[469] *P. Cair. Masp.* I 67006 v, 135-136. *P. Lond.* V 1711, 67-68. Beaucamp 1992, 52.

[470] Beaucamp 1992, 358-60.

[471] *Trullo*, 87 (691/2). Cf. Laiou 1993, 118-21, 128-9, 132, and Messis 2006, 329, 670-1, 700, 720.

[472] *Ecloga* 17.19 - 20.

[473] *Dig.* 48.5.21-5. & 33. On punishments see *Just.* 9.9.4, *Just* 9.9.9, *Just.* 9.9.29, *Inst.* 4.18.4, *Nov.* 117 c. 15 pr (542), *Nov.* 134 c. 10 (556). Beaucamp 1990, 141-2, 165-9, Arjava 1996, 194, 200-1. Cf. Agathias' poem, in which providence, on a moral level, avenges the crime of adultery when the roof falls in, killing the couple, *Anth. Gr*. VII:572. See also *Anth. Gr.* V:302. In Leontios' *St. Symeon,* chapter 14, the son of a deacon is possessed by a demon after committing adultery with a married woman. Beaucamp 1992, 342-7.

[474] The procedure is specified in *Nov.* 117 chapter 8 (2) (542), ruling that the husband first has to give a written warning of his suspicions of adultery before being able to proceed with a divorce, and only after this could accusations of adultery be made. Beaucamp 1990, 146-7, 158-162. It was also stipulated in 8th-century law that accusations of adultery had to be meditated carefully, because married couples were to be protected from malicious rumours and because of the severity of the punishment, *Ecloga* 17.27.

severe (death) penalty in Late Antique legislation. Seclusion in a monastery was stipulated instead, which in practice could be considered a life sentence. The husband was also given the option to pardon his former wife, legislation again leaning towards the protection of existing marriages.[475] Justinian's laws tend to show moderation with regard to women accused of adultery and from a female perspective they are an improvement in this respect compared to previous periods, the laws of Constantine I being the most severe.[476] Regarding fidelity Justinian *Novellae* equated all types of union with marriage and a fiancée was considered being almost married. Therefore, the abduction of either a concubine or a fiancée could lead to accusations not only of rape but also of adultery.[477] Further, a sexual relationship with a nun was equated with adultery and incurred very severe punishment.[478] This turns thus the discussion to the different categories of women, which will be considered in the next section.

E. Social category as a differentiating factor: age, civil status and class

The question of female presence in public space is not only a matter of gender *per se*, but also includes the different categories of women in society. Varying degrees of moral strictness and even different legal rules could apply, depending on the woman's age, civil status or social position.[479]

Women do not constitute a homogeneous group. Postmodern theory regarding the split subject also applies to the female gender: individuals belong to multiple social groups and categories of which being a woman is only one determinant.[480] All societies contain different categories of women, demarcated by age, civil status and factors such as wealth, class and ethnic or religious affiliation. Such determinants may influence normative standards, affecting both moral pressure and legal application, and in Byzantine society these therefore varied for maidens, married women, widows and nuns, or between Orthodox noble women, individuals considered to be heretics, servants and prostitutes. As with the confinement of unmarried daughters, there may exist differences in the gravity of the social restrictions and moral codes guiding behaviour in public depending on the woman's civil status. Byzantine society was highly hierarchical, in that the social codes varied and behavioural expectations diverged depending on the person's civil status and

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475 *Nov*. 134.10 (556) Beaucamp 1990, 149, 168-9.

476 Beaucamp 1990, 169-70. Cf. Garland 1999, 15-16.

477 *Nov.* 150 pr. = *Nov.* 143 (563). Beaucamp 1990, 152. On the 8th century see *Ecloga*, 17.32. Messis 2006, 672. Cf. *Trullo*, 98, on marrying another man's fiancée as an adulterous act. Cf. Laiou 1993, 118, 122. Prinzing 2009, 28-9.

478 Leontsini 1989, 180-1. *Ecloga*, 17.23, 24, 30, describes a sexual relationship with a female monastic as adultery committed against the Church (given that she is the spouse of Christ). Cf. Messis 2006, 671-2, 700.

479 Cf. John Climacus, *Heavenly ladder,* 892C (Deseille, 168) (7th century) states that a sin can be graver for one person than another, depending on individual particularities and other circumstances. See Messis 2006, 710, 714, on Middle Byzantine canonical law on the confession of carnal sins, which advocate consideration of the age and status of the person, and of the circumstances (e.g. need, fear, drunkenness, the duration of the sinful state).

480 E.g. Cranny-Francis et al. 2003, 33-5, and Harré and Secord 1972, 127,183-6. Split, multiple, or fractured identity in postmodern theory signifies that an individual does not have a single identity but identifies with several groups or categories in society (e.g. through class, ethnicity, profession). These self-identifications are fluid and undergo constant changes. Different roles may result in diverse, occasionally even conflicting behavioural patterns.

position.[481] A craftsman's wife was not necessarily expected to yield to a similar degree of segregation from men outside the family circle as an unmarried daughter of a respectable family or the wife of a dignitary. Given the practical realities, not all women could abide by the most strict rules of separation between the sexes, and social status was a major factor in determining the strictness by which such rules were applied.[482] Agathias Scholasticus' short remark in his account of the earthquake in Constantinople in 557, quoted in the introduction, is a revealing example of such attitudes.[483] It indicates that women of the higher classes were not usually seen on the streets, whereas those of a lower social status moved around more freely. The short passage exposes differences in expectations of behaviour in public space among women of varying social status. This was linked to graded moral expectations and meant that social and moral codes were not completely identical for all women.

Although the basic notions of female modesty and proper behaviour were similar for most women both moral norms and law codes differentiated between women depending on their social rank or the recognition of their moral virtue.[484] It is therefore appropriate to consider the legal stipulations that related to the civil status of women and the possible social boundaries they created. The law texts provide information on the juridical categories of women.

Marriage was an important dividing line in most women's lives. A girl in her puberty was considered marriageable: the law allowed girls to be married after reaching the age of 12, the equivalent age for boys being 14.[485] Puberty not only made marriage legal, it is also the lowest age mentioned in the sources for engaging in prostitution, as in the story of Mary of Egypt which claims that she left her parents' house for Alexandria at the age of 12 to throw herself into a life of sexual indulgence.[486] Betrothal was legal already at the age of seven, at which point it was considered a child could have some sort of understanding of the situation and therefore give the formal consent required by law.[487] In the source material it is usually taken for granted that the parents choose the husband of a young girl. Although the law gave the father the last say in such matters, both literary

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[481] E.g. Talbot 1994, 119, on the hierarchical pecking order typical of Byzantine society. Neil 2013a, 2, notes that gender roles were also defined by social status. See Haldon 2009, 170-81, on the dominant Byzantine class and power elite, and how it changed over time from a "senatorial aristocracy" to a "service elite" when the court grew in importance, a shift taking place in the mid-7th century. Messis 2006, 528-34, 544-6, 548, discusses honour, shame and humility, and their significance in a hierarchical society such as the Byzantine. He also evaluates family honour, to which male and female members contributed in different ways, and which had a bodily aspect in a person's *habitus*. Honour and shame were balanced through socially codified behaviour. Furthermore, not only were women expected to behave humbly towards men, children towards parents, and youngsters towards elders, regardless of gender a socially inferior person had to behave meekly towards their social superiors.

[482] Cf. Talbot 1997, 126-7, 129. Cooper 1996, 4. See also Simon-Muscheid 1997, 65, 73, on female servants in late mediaeval West Europe, who also had to meet other criteria to maintain their honour than plane sexual morals common to most women: being honest and trustworthy was as important as being virtuous. Given the different qualities that were appreciated in different types of women, different inherent expectations were at play when a woman's behaviour was judged.

[483] Agathias, *Hist.* V.3.7. See above, 3, and 62. Cf. Talbot 1997, 129.

[484] Beaucamp 1992, 338-9, 344-5, 348.

[485] *Inst.* 1.22. *Ecloga*, 2.1. (8th century) confirms these age limits.

[486] *Life of St. Mary of Egypt*, § 18. Leontsini 1989, 85.

[487] *Dig.* 23.1.14. Cf. also *Inst*. 2.12, *Dig*. 22.6.10. Beaucamp 1990, 241-2. Arjava 1996, 30, 32-37, 84.

and legal sources indicate that it was a social convention to involved mothers in decisions regarding their children, often by referring jointly to 'the parents'.[488] An age considered proper for marriage for daughters of respectable families seems to have been between 14 and 16, as can be deduced from some funerary poems for girls, but in practice there were larger variations.[489] Similarly, according to ecclesiastic rules a child could not choose to enter a monastic life before reaching close to adolescence as such a choice also had to be made knowingly and by own consent. The regulated age differs over time and among the sources, varying between 10 and 17 years.[490]

According to Beaucamp, a father's jurisdiction over his daughter strengthened in Late Antiquity and the early Byzantine period.[491] A father's *potestas* over his children also seems to remain strong in Byzantine society.[492] However, as Laiou notes, the Byzantine family was not purely patriarchal or patrilineal, and the father was not the *pater familias* in the Roman sense, with very extensive rights.[493] If children were left without the male parent a legal guardian had to be appointed until girls reached the age of 12 and boys the age of 14, when a curator was named to supervise financial transactions until their 25th birthday, which was when daughters also came of age.[494] At the age of 20 an individual was already personally responsible for certain actions, such as freeing slaves, and some independent financial transactions were allowed. The law even provided for the possible emancipation of women of good morals who showed good sense to handle their own affairs at the age of 18. The equivalent age for men was 20.[495] In reality, however, most women were already married at this age.

Husbands could on occasion have a role in handling their wives' affairs.[496] Further, if a daughter inherited some *curiae* duties for which, as a woman, she was incapacitated to take executive responsibility, her husband was expected to do so in her name.[497] In terms of personal finances, however, wealthy women controlled their own property. The story of Athanasia

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[488] E.g. Moschos *Prat.spir.,* chapter 201, and some funerary poems for young girls, *Anth. Gr.* VII:568, VII:604. Cf. Arjava 1996, 30, 32-37, 84.

[489] E.g. *Anth. Gr.* VII:568, 600, 601, 604. The *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapters 39-40, tells of Athanasia, who is 18 years of age and married but wishes to leave her husband and to follow a religious life. Theodore of Stoudios' mother (mid-8th century) also seems to have been married at about the age of 15, Efthymiadis & Featherstone 2007, 42 n. 4. Beaucamp 1992, 296-7, reaches similar conclusions on the age of marriage. For a discussion on the age of marriage for males and females in Late Antiquity, see Arjava 1996, 31, 33.

[490] E.g. in *Trullo* 40 (691/2), the age at which a maiden may choose the life of a religious virgin was 17, whereas Leo VI, *Nov.* 6 (9th century) discusses the age limits of 16, 17 and 10 years for entering into a monastery. Cf. Patlagean 1973, 86-8, and. Prinzing 2009, 28-30, 34.

[491] Beaucamp. 1990, 339.

[492] Cf. *Inst.* 1.9.3. See also the discussion on *patria potestas* over adult children in Late Antiquity in Arjava 1996, 41-50, 84-5, 98-104, 107, 109-110, which indicates that there were some adjustments to the father's power over his children in favour of the mother, especially in Justinian legislation. Cf. Prinzing 2009, 34.

[493] Laiou 2009, 57-8.

[494] *Inst.* 10.12. Arjava 1996, 37, 115-7.

[495] E.g. *Dig.*5.3.13 § 1, *Just.* 2.45.2 (1). Cf. Prinzing 2009, 33-4.

[496] E.g. Beaucamp 1992, 194-266, 242, 244, who considers that wives seem to have been under some tutelage of their husbands, as there are documents that state an exemption from such tutelage. However, such a role appears to be connected, at least in part, to transactions related to property considered a part of the inheritance of their common children. In these cases, the concern is the financial security of the children not the wife's incapacity as a woman.

[497] Beaucamp 1990, 29-31. Cf. Arjava 1996, 144, 147-9, 152-4.

exemplifies this: she is described as wealthy, in charge of her possessions and free to dispose of them, whereas her husband is depicted as a squanderer trying secretly to steal some of her money with the help of his servant.[498] Unmarried women of legal age whose parents were not alive were also described as handling their own affairs, as in one of the stories in *Pratum spirituale* indicates. It is about a daughter of rich, deceased parents who is left without guidance in her affairs. Through kindness of heart she gives away most of her fortune, becomes destitute and falls into a disreputable lifestyle. An underlying implication seems to be that the orphaned daughter had no appointed *curator* or *tutor* but was in charge of her own wealth and its disposal.[499]

Although the position of a wife in relation to her husband seems to slightly weaken, from Late Antiquity onwards the law strengthened the position of the mother.[500] Egyptian papyri from the 6th century also show that, although the law considered children to belonged to their father, praxis in cases of divorce varied and mothers were sometimes granted custody.[501] Being a widow in particular increased a woman's possibility to act with greater autonomy in various transactions and over time widows gained increasing rights and higher authority regarding their children and exceptions were made in different legal fields the often occurring exemptions of women.[502] It seems that in many cases praxis superseded legislation. Some Egyptian documents from the 6th and 7th centuries show mothers taking on roles that were usually considered duties of the father, such as giving their daughter in marriage or giving a child up for adoption, roles that only became officially recognised for widowed mothers in legal texts of the 8th century.[503] As Talbot points out, although life expectancy for women was lower than for men due to risks in childbirth and other similar reasons, wives tended to be younger than their husbands and therefore, if they survived the calamities, they tended to outlive their spouses. There seems to have been a notable number of widows, therefore, giving them special consideration in legislation, for example, had social significance.[504] The rights of widowed mothers increased up until the 6th century in particular and were also prominent in Justinian legislation. As long as the father was alive he had legal authority over the children, but a mother, and later even a grandmother, was allowed to act as *tutor* for her children, or grandchildren, if their father had died and there was no provision by testament for a legal *tutor,* and for the mother if she took an oath not to remarry.[505] No woman other than the mother

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[498] Cf. *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapters 42-45. Note that in Roman law by trad. the property of spouses was strictly separated, although a shift in attitudes occurred in Late Antiquity, e.g. Arjava 1996, 111, 124, 133-49, 152-4.

[499] Moschos, *Prat.spir.* ch. 207.

[500] Beaucamp 1990, 309-12, 339. On the mother's position see e.g., *Inst.* 3.3.4 and *Inst*. 4.8.7. Cf. e.g. *Inst.* 2.19.3. for the strong position of the father.

[501] Two agreements gave the mother custody of at least one child and one gave it to the father. One, possibly two, are examples of joint custody of some sort, and according to one a girl first lived with her mother and then with her father when the mother remarried (*P.Flor*. i. 93. 19 = *P.Lond.* v. 1713 = *MChr* 297 = *FIRA* iii. 22 (569); *P.Masp.* ii. 671 55. 24 (6th c.); *P.Lond*. v. 1712. 26 (569); *P.Masp.* ii. 671 54r. 25 (6th c.); *P.Lond*. v. 1731 = *FIRA* iii. 23 (585); *P.Herm*. 29.1. 18.9 (586)). Beaucamp 1992, 160-2, Arjava 1996, 87 Cf. Kazhdan & Talbot, 1991/1992, 403, and Laiou 2009, 56-8.

[502] Beaucamp 1992, 332-3. Beaucamp 1990, 312-4.

[503] *Ecloga* 2.5.1. Beaucamp 1992, 179-190, Badel 2012, 91-6. Cf. Arjava 1996, 85, Talbot 1997, 128-9.

[504] Talbot 1997, 128-9. Cf. Prinzing 31-2, 34.

[505] E.g. *Just.* 5.35.2, pr., *Just.* 5.35.3 (2) & (3), *Nov.* 22, c. 40, *Nov.* 89 c.14, *Nov.* 94 pr. & c.1-2, *Nov.* 118 c. 5.

or grandmother could take on the legal role of *tutor*, which was still considered a male function. Beaucamp showed in her study of papyri that at least in Egypt existed a practice to give the mother precedence as *tutor* or *curator* of her children over any other male relatives upon the death of their father in the absence of testamentary provision for a *tutor*.[506] All this links to the increased esteem of the mother found in other sources, as discussed above.

Contrasting the increased authority of the widowed mother, the laws verbalise the need for special protection of widows, also expressed in other sources. In these cases, the law equates widows with orphans, as having lost their natural protector when their husband died.[507] Thus, on the one hand a wife was under the protection of her husband and needed special consideration if she lost it, but on the other hand, laws increasingly recognised the legal rights of mothers over their children, especially as widows and the sole surviving parent.

One dilemma affecting the legislation regarding women was the fact that the mother was the only parent being with certainty affirmed, fatherhood always being open to doubt. In Roman law this led to an advanced legislation on adultery, divorce, widowhood and remarriage, to a great part originally aiming to secure legitimate fatherhood of a child and to provide certainty of legal heirs for a man. A subsequent aim was to provide security for the children and their inheritance. Much of the moral, social and legal circumscribing of female activities and movability was initially related to such concerns.

It had always been difficult for women to obtain a divorce, but increasingly rigid laws decreased accepted reasons for divorce also for men, which equalised the position of the spouses to some extent.[508] Justinian I abolished consensual divorce, but the law was unpopular and his successor Justin II rescinded it in 566.[509] Laws in the 8th century made divorce even more difficult with their Christian "what God has unified, may man not divide" approach, therefore annulling most reasons for divorce for both men and women. The few exceptions for men included the wife's infidelity, for women the inability of the husband to consummate the marriage after three years, and for both if the other party plotted against the spouse's life, or in case of leprosy.[510] In both the event of divorce and of the death of the husband there were strict rules on the time that had to elapse, usually one year, before a woman could remarry without legal sanctions, mainly to ensure beyond doubt the fatherhood of any unborn children, as they also had inheritance rights. A woman who remarried before the end of the period of mourning was heavily chastised by the law.[511] Second marriages were discouraged, especially by the Church and occasionally also in legal texts, although they were legally permitted.[512]

Beaucamp 1990, 309-337.

[506] *Dig.* 26.1.16 pr. Beaucamp 1990, 327, 330-334. Beaucamp 1992, 175-179. Cf. Arjava 1996, 89-94, 104, Prinzing 2009, 31-2, 34, and Cameron 2000b, 69.

[507] Beaucamp 1990, 106.

[508] Arjava 1996, 182, and Beaucamp 1990, 176-7, 222-6.

[509] *Nov*. 117 c. 8-9. *Nov.* 140 (566). Laiou 2000, 77, Arjava 1996, 182, 185, Giardina 2000, 397.

[510] *Ecloga* 2.9.1-3. Cf. Messis 2006, 668-9.

[511] E.g. *Ecloga* 2.8.1. Beaucamp 1990, 180-1, Beaucamp 1992, 343-4, Arjava 1996, 168, and Messis 2006, 422.

[512] E.g. *Trullo*, 87. Cf. Talbot 1997, 128-9.

A child born within legal matrimony inherited the social status of its father, but if born without the existence of nuptial ties, it usually inherited its mother's station in life.[513] Forming a legal union proceeded in two steps, via betrothal to marriage.[514] Roman law traditionally required a dowry to be provided for the woman to constitute a legal marriage, and a union without a dowry could therefore be considered a concubinage.[515] This might make it difficult for families with meagre means to give daughters a legal marriage. Over time the requirements were slightly eased, at least for individuals from the lower strata of society. In a couple of *Novellae* Justinian laid down the rules for contracting a legal marriage according to each social class. The requirements differed for high dignitaries, people of middle rank, peasants and soldiers, with stricter rules for the nobility and more informal arrangements among the lower classes. Thereby these laws also delineate the basic division into social rank used for citizens in the contemporary society. According to the law, a dowry contract was still needed for legal marriage among high dignitaries, whereas a declaration in front of a Church advocate sufficed for those in the middle strata of society, and no special conditions existed for peasants or soldiers.[516] The law was concerned with the social status of the bridegroom when regulating the requirements for a legal marriage to take effect. Other requirements included mutual consent to form a union and that the wife should take up residency in the home of her husband: in other words, cohabitation was a major factor constituting a legal marriage.[517] A shift in attitude is detectable as some laws stated that matrimonial affection, not merely cohabitation, constituted the basis of a lawful marriage.[518] The law in the 8th century stated that either a written or an oral contract between a man and a woman who were of lawful age, made with the agreement of both as well as of their parents, constituted a Christian marriage. The variety of procedures still present in Justinian law were by then simplified in a single formula, and the Christian elements became emphasised.[519] However, it was not until the 9th century that obligatory religious benediction of a marriage was demanded.[520]

Traditionally, if the match was between socially unequal partners the alternative was cohabitation based on the old custom of concubinage. This could still be the practise when the woman was of inferior origin, such as a freed woman or a slave, but it was not a necessity.[521] Although cohabitation could be considered demeaning and immoral, and as tarnishing the reputation of a respectable woman, concubinage was neither illegal nor branded as *stuprum* (infamy) by the

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513 *Dig*. 1.5.19 & 24. The mother's position also determined if a child was freeborn or a slave, *Inst.* 1.3.4 & *Inst.* 1.4.

514 Beaucamp 1990, 240-2.

515 White 1982, 540. For a discussion on the dowry and the nuptial gift, see Arjava 1996, 52-60, who points out that a dowry was not originally compulsory for a Roman marriage, even if it was customary.

516 *Nov.* 74, c. 4 (AD 538), *Nov.* 117, chapters 4 & 6 (AD 542). Beaucamp 1990, 268, Arjava 1996, 206, Giardina 2000, 401-2. See Laiou 2000, 73-6, on non-dotal marriages or 'common law' marriages from Justinian I to *Ecloga*.

517 E.g. *Nov*. 74 chapter 5, *Nov*. 117 c. 4. Although some laws emphasise that consent, not cohabitation, constitutes a marriage, *Dig.* 23.3.58 & 50.17.30.Cf. Patlagean 1974, 64, and Giardina 2000, 401-2.

518 *Dig.* 39.5.31. White 1982, 542. Outside the legal framework, matrimonial love and affection had long been traditional ideals, e.g. Arjava 1996, 127.

519 *Ecloga* 2.1. On the dowry and contracting legal marriages, see *Ecloga* 5.1. Cf. Messis 2006, 668, 670.

520 Leo VI, *Nov. 89* (late 9th century).

521 Beaucamp 1990, 297-8, Arjava 1996, 205-10. See also, Laiou 1993, 111, 113-4, Laiou 2009, 56-7.

law.[522] Only women of illustrious descent from the highest stratum of society were prohibited from living in concubinage with an inferior man.[523] Legal attitudes towards concubinage slightly changed in the 6th century. It was still not directly illegal for a man to have several concubines simultaneously, although society might have considered it immoral, but a Justinian *Novella* condemns such practice by refusing these women the proper assignation of concubine, referring to them as women who prostitute themselves. The fact that the law prohibited a man from having a concubine if he had a legal wife shows that the institution was seen as comparable to marriage in some respects.[524] These same Justinian *Novellae* do compare to some degree the status of a single concubine in a relationship of long duration with that of a wife.[525]

Legislation also made it possible to safeguard and improve the position of a concubine, especially if there were common children. Again, it was in her capacity as a mother that the position of a woman was appreciated and could be improved. The father of children born during cohabitation could legitimise them and through that change the status of their mother from that of a concubine to that of a lawful wife. The initiative lay totally in the hands of the man, the woman being the passive party. Such retroactive verification of a union, to legitimise mutual children, could therefore be done unilaterally by the man, diverting from the stated principle of mutual consent constituting a legal marriage.[526] Even so, given that wives had a higher status and better juridical security, a concubine, already having consented to cohabitation, would hardly oppose such a change in her status. In fact, it must have been seen as a privilege not only for the children, at whom this procedure was primarily targeted, but also for the woman whose union with the man could become a legal marriage through the legitimisation of their children.

Not all concubines could hope to reach the position of a legal wife, however, and as Herrin points out, women living in concubinage were for the most part socially inferior and usually completely dependent on their partner.[527] However, the dividing line seemed to become more blurred over time and cohabitation became increasingly more equivalent to marriage, at least in the lower strata of society.[528] There were also categories of women for whom legal marriage was prohibited, such as prostitutes, former prostitutes and 'madams' who kept prostituted girls, and cohabitation was therefore their only option.[529] From a Christian point of view concubinage was not acceptable. The Apostolic Constitution from the 4th century did not approve of concubinage among Christian congregations, and Church Fathers urged men not to live in sinful cohabitation but either to legalise the marriage or end such a union.[530] Despite the ecclesiastical opposition, however,

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[522] Beaucamp 1990, 298. See also, Cameron 2006a, 122, Arjava 1996, 217-20, Laiou 1993, 111, 113-4, and Laiou 2009, 56-7.
[523] Beaucamp 1990, 307. The legal provision seems to indicate that such unions did occasionally occur.
[524] Beaucamp 1992, 352, noting that social practice was not always congruous with the law. Cf. Laiou 1993, 111.
[525] *Just.* 7.15.3, *Nov.* 18, chapter 5 (536) = *Nov.* 89, chapter 12 (5) (539). Beaucamp 1990, 175, 201, 305-6.
[526] *Nov*. 89, chapter. 4 (539), *Nov.* 117, c.2 (542). Beaucamp. 1990, 268, 281-2. Cf. Arjava 1996, 212, 216-7.
[527] Herrin 1984, 171. Cf. Beaucamp 1990, 298.
[528] Beaucamp 1990, 152, 303-5. Cf. Laiou 1993, 111, 122, and Laiou 2009, 56-7.
[529] Beaucamp 1990, 205.
[530] Beaucamp 1992, 357-8.

concubinage continued to exist. Nikephoros mentions as late as for the 7th century the sons of two concubines of men in high social positions, Emperor Heraklios and a patrician named Bonos.[531] Concubinage was legally abolished only in the 9th century, at the same time as church blessing became a requirement for marriage.[532]

Marriages between individuals from the same social stratum were probably the most common, but in case of social difference between the spouses, the woman in general assumed the rank and dignity of her husband. She rose to his social class if she originated from inferior circumstances and was referred to with epithets corresponding to the dignity of her husband. The law gave wives of men such as doctors, grammarians, rhetors, clerics and imperial officials certain privileges corresponding with those of their husbands and the wife of a consul shared his rank and esteem and might also wear insignia that signified this.[533] Nikephoros relates an episode that illustrates this idea that wives could parallel the functions of their husbands. During the rule of Heraklios the chieftain of the Huns came to Constantinople with his entourage and wished to embrace the Christian faith. Byzantine noblemen functioned as godparents at the baptismal and their wives acted in the same function for the wives of the Huns.[534] On another occasion, when the bride of Leo IV, the future Empress Irene, arrived from Athens and entered Constantinople she was met by prominent men of the city together with their wives.[535]

Byzantine society was hierarchical. As Beaucamp points out, a permanent feature of the legislation was that moral guilt and definitions of morality depended on a woman's social status. Sexual morals, in particular, were at their strictest for *matres familiarum*, in other words respectable married women who were not of low or servile descent, did not have a degrading profession and were not too poor to consider such aspects.[536] The law also emphasised the importance of prudence and chastity for illustrious women in comparison to other women, as well as the significance for honourable women not to appear too freely in public.[537]

Societal stratification, with its shifting attitudes to women of varying social and moral standing, gave rise to some special stipulations. Women of ill fame or who were branded with *stuprum*, such as adulterers and prostitutes, could not be called as witnesses in court.[538] Honourable women, on the other hand, were given the opportunity to give testimony in their own home, without having to appear in court. The law thus made provision for certain women, in practice *matres familiarum*, and in law cases concerning them, to give testimony under oath in their own house in

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[531] Nikephoros, *Brev*. 13, (written at the end of the 8th century). These sons were used in the diplomatic game to fend off the Avars threatening the capital, having been given as hostages, together with Heraklios' nephew Stephen, the son of his sister Maria, to secure peace. Cf. Laiou 1993, 111.

[532] Leo VI, *Nov.* 91 (late 9th century).

[533] E.g. *Just.* 1.3.2, *Just.* 5.4, *Just.* 10.53.6 & 11, *Just.* 11.10.6, *Just.* 12.1.12 pr, *Just*. 12.16.4, *Just.* 12.21.8, *Just.* 12.25.3 & 4, *Dig*. 1.9.8, *Dig.* 27.10.5, *Nov*. 105, c. 2 pr (537). Beaucamp 1990, 271-8, Beaucamp 1992, 309-11, and Arjava 1996, 124.

[534] Nikephoros, *Brev.* 9.

[535] Theophanes, *Chron.* 6261 [768/9].

[536] Beaucamp 1992, 344-5, Beaucamp 1990, 22.

[537] *Just.* 6.57.5. Cf. Beaucamp 1990, 22, 307, 348. See also Agathias, *Hist.* V.3.7, quoted in the introduction.

[538] *Dig*. 22.5.3, *Dig.* 28.1.20, *Nov.* 90 (539). Beaucamp 1990, 45.

the presence of witnesses or representatives who then would bring the testimony to the court.[539] In this way a woman could participate in a lawsuit without tainting her reputation. A woman still could, of course, appear in court in person. Later the demand for seclusion and the protection of female modesty grew even stronger in Byzantine society. In the late 9th century, Leo VI issued a law that deprived women of any possibility to act as witnesses, giving as reason that they should not frequently appear before the eyes of men or do any such thing that was especially within the province of the male sex. The only exceptions were cases in which men could not act as witnesses such as those related to convents, confinements and other situations in which only women were allowed to be present.[540] The idea of an exclusion of the female sex from the law courts was not as pronounced in previous centuries.

Crimes and punishments that the law texts deal with and which concern women are adultery and immorality, for example. The punishments included financial sanctions and loss of property, as well as legal sanctions. A woman branded with infamy, *stuprum*, was excluded from some of the legal protection and legal rights granted to honourable women and it could affect her possibility to inherit. In that none of these punishments affect the discussion on women and public space, there is no reason to deliberate further on these issues. On the other hand, laws regarding the imprisonment of women are relevant. As stated in a *Novella* from the year 556, for reasons of morality and prudence it was forbidden to detain a woman in prison in a civil case, and even in a criminal case, if the crime was not too severe. The woman could present a guarantor or take an oath that she would come before the tribunal. In more severe criminal cases the law stated that the woman be held under the guard of nuns in a convent or under some other form of female guardianship where she could be guarded in a chaste manner, because, "no woman should /.../ be thrown in prison or guarded by men, in fear not to having her find herself in that occasion submitted to an outrage against her chastity".[541] Despite the prohibition of detaining women in prisons, Beaucamp notes that, according to evidence from Egyptian papyri, common practice did not necessarily follow the normative texts and there were women put in prisons with men. She points out though, that treatment probably dependant on the social status and class of the woman as well as the nature of the crime.[542] Regardless of the circumstances, in the end women were at the mercy of male authority, as seen in the case of a certain Sophia from Aphrodito: she appealed to the duke for justice after suffering imprisonment and torture, among other things.[543]

The above-mentioned *Novella* also changed the death penalty for an adulteress that originated in the laws of Constantine I to lifetime imprisonment in a convent. The husband was given the opportunity to pardon his wife and to take her back within two years, if he did not, she

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[539] *Just.* 2.58[59].2 (1), *Nov*. 124 chapter 1 (544). Beaucamp 1990, 137, and Arjava 1996, 243-5. See also *Just.* 2.55[56].6 and *Just.* 8.37[38].14.

[540] Leo VI, *Nov.* no. 48. Messis 2006, 574-5, and Geanakoplos 1984, 304.

[541] *Nov*. 134, chapters 9 & 10 (556). Cf. Beaucamp 1990, 137, 168-9, and Humfress 2005, 179.

[542] E.g. *PSI* I 52, *PSI* VII 824, *Stud. Pal*. X 252, *SB* VI 9146. Beaucamp 1992, 75-77, 339.

[543] *P.Cair.Masp*. I 67005 (567 or 568). Another imprisoned female is mentioned in *P.Cair.Masp*. II 67202 (6th century). Ruffini 2011, 31, 545. Cf. the 9th-century *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, chapter 36: it tells, admittedly with an agenda to discredit the Emperor, of a nun named Anna who, for political reasons was put into prison, flogged publicly to admit to fornication with the saint, and eventually confined in a convent.

was to take the habit and stay in the convent for the rest of her life.[544] Ten years earlier the law issued a similar punishment for any deaconess who lived with a man and thus gave cause to suppose she was living a dishonourable life. Her fortune was to be confiscated and she would be detained in a convent for the rest of her life.[545]

One poem by Agathias sits well at the end of this discussion on the different social categories of women. It compares the pursuit of various women, concurrently revealing in an illustrative way social expectations and diverse moral shame associated with women in different social positions.

> By what road shall one go to the Land of Love?
> If you seek him in the streets,
> you will repent the courtesan's greed for gold.
> If you approach a maiden's bed,
> it must end in lawful wedlock
> or punishment for seduction.
> Who would endure to awake reluctant desire
> in his lawful wife, and force her to her duty?
> Adulterous intercourse is the worst of all and has no part in love,
> and the sin of loving boys should be ranked with it.
> As for widows, if one of them is ill-conducted,
> she is anyone's mistress, and knows all the arts of harlotry,
> while if she is chaste she with difficulty consents,
> she is pricked by loveless remorse, hates what she has done,
> and having a remnant of shame hastes
> to announce the end of the union.
> If you associate with your own servant,
> you have to bear to become the slave of a servant.
> If she is someone else's slave,
> the law which prosecutes for outrage on others property
> will mark you with infamy.
> All this Diogenes escaped,
> when he sang the wedding song using his own palm,
> without missing Laïs.[546]

Agathias was a trained lawyer, hence the poem reflects not only ideas about categories of women in society, but also official legislation such as the prohibition of seducing unwed girls, committing adultery or having a sexual union with someone else's slave.[547]

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[544] *Nov.* 134, chapters 9 & 10 (556). Cf Arjava 1996, 200-1.

[545] *Nov.* 123, c. 30 (546). Beaucamp 1990, 184.

[546] *Anth. Gr.*, V:302 (based on translation by W.R. Patton with modifications by the author).

[547] Cf. Laiou 1993, 117, also connecting this poem with legislation. 8th-century law also set punishments for the conducting of sexual relationships between master and slave, *Ecloga* 17.21 - 22. Middle Byzantine Church law defines three types of fornication (*porneia*): sexual relations with an adult unmarried woman; a widow; a slave or a prostitute

Differences in social class also meant differences in opportunities. As Talbot notes, women of the aristocracy had better opportunities to pursue learning and to benefit from such possibilities.[548] Likewise, a daughter of a *rhetor* could achieve some learning, if Agathias' funeral poem for his sister is to be believed: he claims that she was learned in the science of law, although to what extent we cannot know.[549] A woman's personal wealth also played a significant role in the degree of her social independence and freedom of action.[550]

As shown above, in certain cases Roman law defined specific legal boundaries for women. Some laws were limiting in nature, but such legal limitations mainly concerned administrative and fiscal matters or economic aspects and issues related to inheritance or the custody of children, for example. Other laws were protective in nature: they considered the presumed feebleness of women and social demands regarding their chastity, therefore providing special conditions such as the opportunity to give witness in the family home and recommending convents instead of prisons as places of confinement. Protection for women also concerned their financial transactions, managing their own estate, and their possible ignorance of the law. Although they were officially excluded from much of public life and totally exempted from public office, and although various legal restrictions affected their participation in legal transactions or attendance in law courts, for example, it should be pointed out that there was no law excluding women from any particular public space. Even if the law allowed a respectable woman to give witness in her own home, there was nothing preventing her from appearing personally in court in a case concerning her. Furthermore, there were several categories of women who were not in a position to benefit from this possibility.[551]

Although many of the law texts point out exemptions for reasons of female modesty and morality, a woman still was free to go against ideas of good behaviour. Much of the concern expressed in legal texts is of a moral nature, reflecting general attitudes, and some of the particular provisions regarding women arise from them, but there was no law explicitly excluding women from public space.[552] The exclusion and limitations were on an abstract legal level, and hardly ever on a tangible material level limiting female participation in societal life. Although women were excluded from much of public life in theory, as Angeliki Laiou notes, in practice they were not necessarily prevented by their gender from engaging in political or financial activities, and other aspects such as class and family relations were just as important in guiding their behaviour.[553] Social pressure and moral codes, manifested also in normative texts, rather than imperial and canonical laws *per se*, affected women and might prevent their appearing in public.[554]

(including any woman who willingly and habitually slept with several men), *Kanonarion I*, ed. Arranz, p. 52. Laiou 1993, 118, 128-9, 124-5, 132, and Messis 2006, 671, 698.

[548] Talbot 1997, 120.

[549] *Anth. Gr.*, VII:593. The poem is quoted above, 70.

[550] Cf. Arjava 1996, 132-3.

[551] Cf. the mid-9th century. *Vita Tarasii*, § 5, on how some poor women were dragged into court based on superstitious accusations.

[552] Cf. Arjava 1996, 243-6.

[553] Laiou 1982, 202-3.

[554] Cf. Messis 2006, 535-6, 541, 547, who discusses a division of societies into *civilisations de honte* (civilisations of shame) and *civilisations de culpabilité* (civilisations of liability): Byzantine society was largley a society of shame and

Egyptian papyri from the 6th century include expressions and usage which show that Justinian's legal texts spread quickly and were used in the province.[555] On the other hand, Joëlle Beaucamp comes to the conclusion that practice did not always fully correspond with the law code.[556] Her research in its own way exemplifies Laiou's comment on normative texts: "Law is, by definition, a unifying institution, and one, therefore, which tends to obscure, if not extinguish, local customs. Customs and practices must be uncovered, to the extent possible, and only then will regional divergences emerge."[557] Some of the discrepancy between norms and praxis may well be attributable to differences in regional traditions. Another important factor was social hierarchy, as social status and class influenced behaviour and how the surrounding society responded to an individual.

Over time there was a shift in legal attitudes as well as in the actual statutes related to women. Although women by tradition tended officially to lack independence and were under the authority or guidance of a man, be it a father, a guardian or a husband, some changes occurred towards the 6th century: the strengthened position of the mother and the expanding legal freedom for widows, for example. Simultaneously the explanatory rhetoric concerning women and their position changed somewhat from assumptions of a natural inequality between the sexes towards a more moral and practical rationalisation and references to tradition. There were even some pronouncements of theoretical equalisation of the genders.

The boundaries of female behaviour, created through both legal conditions and socially accepted codes, incorporated a wide spectrum of notions and ideas. Occasionally, opposite explanations were used to underline the need for female decorum. Restrictions on female activities in public space tended to remain on the moral, psychological and theoretical level, and only occasionally took the form of legal limitations. Attempts to check the behaviour of women went by way of common attitudes and social pressure. Ideals and models of female public behaviour were conveyed in public sermons and stories from saints' lives, for example, and changes occurred over time shifting their focus. Justinian legislation brought some improvement in the position of at least some women, such as widows and mothers.

One can sum the above discussion in five points. 1) General *topoi* on the female nature, such as feebleness, passivity and naivety on the one hand and women as potential knowledgeable temptresses on the other, both reflected in the image of Eve, justified juridical and moral protection and restrictions. 2) Ideals of virginity, chastity and motherhood gave reason to underline the separation of women from men. 3) Gender segregation and limitations on the presence of females in public space were based mostly on moral and ethical ideas derived from customs and tradition rather than any specific legal clauses. 4) Social class and civil status, regulated by legal stipulations, also greatly affected how moral codes of female behaviour were applied and to whom. 5) Social codes regarding women's participation in the public part of society were traditional for the most part, based on ideas about the female nature and images of ideal womanhood.

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only minimally one of liability, in that social control of proper behaviour played a larger part.

[555] Taubenschalg 1940-1, 280-95.

[556] E.g. Beaucamp 1992, 82, 102-3, 367-374.

[557] Laiou 1982, 202.

Laws and norms provided models on which to shape behaviour. Daily life, on the other hand, required compromise and the adjustment of given norms, demanding certain flexibility in their application. This created tension between accepted norms and actual practices. There is a dynamic relationship between norms and practicality. Norms are constantly renegotiated and adjusted, sometimes they even have to give way to praxis.[558]

Talbot claims in relation to female presence in public space: "among the few acceptable reasons for well-bread women to venture forth in public were attendance at church services, visits to religious shrines, and the performance of the charitable activities which were viewed as an expression of love for Christ."[559] However, she explicitly refers to well-bred women. The family and the household were without doubt the ideological and the real realm of women. The picture is more complex than the normative material suggests, however. The extent to which and how social codes were obeyed did not always correspond with professed ideas.[560] The following chapters examine the actual participation of women in the public realm of society.

[558] Cf. McGuire 1997, 112, 116, 118-120, on early Cistercian life. He concentrates on *tension* and *dynamism* between norm and practice rather than the *dichotomy*. He notes how *exempla* could reassure norms, but in the process they became integrated with practice, and sometimes local or regional needs demanded flexibility in the appliance of norms, depending on what was considered more important: survival of conditions or strict appliance to norms. Flexibility was applied for the good of more general interest. Cf. Messis 2006, 21.

[559] Talbot 1994, 106.

[560] Cf. Kazhdan & Constable 1998, 159: "Byzantine mentality was split, because it had different yardsticks. It led at the same time to a lofty moral system based on the covenant with God and to a reliance on human reason in practical activities. An apparent incongruity existed between the stable principles of religious ethics and the day-by-day behaviour, adapted to circumstances, of the Byzantines."

III Piety, charity and religion

According to some scholars, although Byzantine women were excluded from much of official public life, they had an importance and were active in the cultural field. The sphere of religion was prominent in Byzantium, thus it is in this connection and within the institutions of the Church that the roles played by women are most apparent.[561] Given that much of the evident signs of female participation in society outside the domestic sphere in the source material relates in one way or another to religious activities, it is understandable that a lot of the attention from scholars interested in Byzantine women has focussed on these. Activities that scholars suggest were open to female participation included worship and pilgrimage, involvement in religious controversies, religious teaching for children or in private study groups and charitable activities, as well as the founding of churches or monasteries by those with wealth enough to afford it.[562]

There has been extensive research on female religiosity. Regardless of the types of women's participation in religious activities listed above, however, the private nature of female devotion is often emphasised, the assumption being that female religious self-expression is basically private. This assumed privacy is also underlined in discussions about the development of veneration of icons. Scholars have associated the evolving reverence of icons in the early Byzantine period with female piety and worship, especially as veneration of icons is possible in the privacy of one's home.[563] The source material contains many stories about women's actions on behalf of the *iconophiles* in the Iconoclastic controversy of the 8th century, although some scholars urge caution in making assumptions based on these biased accounts.[564] Nicholas Gendle gives an alternative perspective. He connects the increasing use of icons with neither specifically private nor female worship, but with the intense cults developing around saints, especially the ascetic and the monastic, occurring also in the early Byzantine centuries.[565] Admittedly, icons were venerated in the privacy of the home at an early stage, and as scholars have pointed out, the domestic sphere was one important space where the veneration of icons evolved.[566] Even so, it was not the only place for icons nor the only factor affecting evolvement of their veneration.[567] Several stories about female veneration of icons are set in public spaces, as discussed below.

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[561] E.g. Herrin 1984, 183 acknowledges women's important cultural role within the Church, and Talbot 1997, 134 discusses female piety as a social outlet to compensate for their lack of official political power.

[562] E.g. Talbot 1997, 132-136. She has devoted much research to religious aspects in the lives of Byzantine women.

[563] See e.g. Herrin 1983, 75, Herrin 1984, 183, and Herrin 2013, 163 on women's devotion to icons, and the transmission of the practice from mother to child as characteristic of their role in the domestic sphere.

[564] E.g. Cormack 1997, *passim.*, Kazhdan & Talbot 1991/1992, 391, 394-7, Herrin 1983, 68-75, Talbot 2001, 4-5 and Cameron 2006a, 104-5. See Brubaker & Haldon 2011, 58, 62, on earlier holy images, but without indications of specific veneration until the late 7th century, and on later interpolations in some sources with tales of veneration. Gendle 1981, 185, gives examples of men using icons. The *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, chapters 4, 6, 10, 24, 26, 48-51, 54, features both men and women showing devotion to icons. The text is from the early 9th century when icon veneration had become established, and one of its purposes is to condemn iconoclasts and praise defenders of icons.

[565] Gendle 1981, *passim.*

[566] Cf. Kazhdan & Talbot 1991/1992, 391, Herrin 1983, 66-69, 71, 73-74, Herrin 2013, 284-6, 292-3, and Krueger 2005, 310-1.

[567] Cf. Cormack 1997, 31-36, criticising Herrin's view of a strong female promotion of icons through private worship.

Connecting to this discussion is the suggestion that women, at least in some social classes, preferred to worship in the privacy of their home. Talbot considers, relating to the late-9th-century *vita* of Mary the Younger, that "among the upper classes it was the norm to have a private chapel, not just for convenience and as a mark of social status, but because it was considered more seemly for the women of the family to worship within the privacy of their homes."[568] This may have been the case in later centuries, but there is not much evidence of private chapels before the 7th century. From then on there are some references to arranging opportunities for religious worship in private houses, especially for women. One of John Moschos' stories mentions a wife from a Monophysite household taking Holy Communion at the house of her Orthodox female neighbour.[569] Some canons from the council in *Trullo* state that religious celebration in private chapels is not allowed without the permission of the bishop, and baptism under no circumstances.[570] This changed in 9th-century legislation, which allowed any kind of service in private chapels, including baptism.[571] The emphasis on privacy in female religiosity is thus not so strong in material from the Early Byzantine period, becoming more pronounced towards the Middle Byzantine period.

Although religious conviction could be considered a private matter, there is a public side to religiosity: indeed, faith was not an altogether private matter in pre-modern communities. The religious beliefs of individuals were monitored, and people were judged based on their religious choices, some of which even had legal consequences. There were laws excluding heretics of some of the legal protection for the dowry of women of the Orthodox faith, for example.[572] The many theological controversies afflicting Late Antiquity and Early Byzantium also emphasised personal faith, which either had to be concealed in the case of pagans or factions considered heretic, or actively displayed to stress belongingness to the religious majority. Garland considers how the future Empress Sophia, who originally and openly had Monophysite sympathies, officially converted to *Chalcedonianism* with her husband Justin, probably for political reasons related to the imperial succession, and the significance thereafter to convince the Orthodox side of their true adherence to these beliefs.[573] In a society in which religion played an important role and piety was an esteemed feature in an individual, displaying piety became a crucial element of a person's public image and of the way he or she wanted to be seen and evaluated by others. Visibility assumed importance and the theory of the 'gaze', discussed earlier, came into play.[574]

Religious veneration took many forms, some being public in themselves or merely being performed in public space. The veneration of icons could take place in private, as well as in a church where it could be observed. One regular activity in a public space was the celebration of mass. There were also special religious feasts and ceremonies such as the commemoration of specific saints, the veneration of relics, baptismal ceremonies and funerals. Some members of the community took part

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568 Talbot 1994, 111.
569 Moschos, *Prat.Spir*. chapter 29.
570 *Trullo*, 31, 59 (691/2).
571 Leo VI, *Nov.* 15 (late 9th c.).
572 E.g. *Just.* 1.5.1, and *Nov*. 109 c. 1.
573 Garland 1999, 44-45.
574 See Chapter I.B., 21, cf. also Chapter II.A., 57

in religious processions, possibly having a specified function. Pilgrimage, either to holy ascetics nearby or to faraway holy sites, had a prominent role in religious life if traveling was afforded or the life situation demanded it. Making financial contributions such as distributing alms or donating to ecclesiastic establishments secured those concerned not only benevolence from Heaven on a spiritual level, but also high social esteem. Making donations to ecclesiastic establishments reflected the donor's social status and importance in that it was connected to surplus wealth to some extent, and the value of the donation was related to the donor's financial capacity. To have such an effect, however, some visibility was necessary.

Returning to the veneration of icons, the *Miracles of Saint Artemios* tells the story of a woman named Anna who lived near the church of St. John the Baptist in Constantinople, in which there was an icon of the saint. Following a family tradition she lit a lamp in front of this icon every day, and if she was too busy she asked the twelve-year-old daughter of her neighbours, Euphemia, to do so.[575] Another story in the same collection relates how the mother of a cured child gave thanks before an icon of Christ situated in front of the sacristy door in the church, which functioned as a healing sanctuary.[576] One of John Moschos' *Pratum Spirituale* tales is about a woman who is having a well dug in the vicinity of Apamea. Her first attempts to reach water were unfruitful and cost her a lot of money, but then she heard about a wonder-working icon representing St. Theodosius. She sent for it, and it was lent to her: when it was lowered into the well, water gushed forth in plenty.[577] The icons in these examples were venerated or used in more or less public locations. Regardless of the reality of the stories, interpreted either as spiritual tales emanating from actual events or as edifying pious fiction, religious writers mentioning such veneration show that displays of piety and faith had value. Even as religious fiction such stories functioned in spiritual literature as *exempla* of esteemed female religious zeal and conduct. They show that the veneration of icons displayed in public places was an appropriate and desirable practice through which women could demonstrate religious devotion.

According to Judith Herrin, among others, the veneration of icons, even in churches, gave women in particular the opportunity for a more personal and privet way to express their religious sentiments and to worship: it was detached from the liturgy, did not need the assistance of ecclesiastic personnel and could be performed freely at any time. She perceives a strong connection between the female preference for icons and the limited opportunities for women for a religious self-expression in society in general: they were usually expected to take a passive role, whereas venerating icons gave chance for a personal religious self-expression.[578] Although icons could provide the gratification of a personal spiritual connection, a straight line between female exclusion and devotion to icons may be too simplistic a view of women's religious role in society, and there are other explanations as well for their seemingly active interest in icons.[579] Averil Cameron also

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[575] *Mir. St. Art.*, no. 34 (relates to early 7th c.). The girl's mother is named Ioannia Maxima and is described as being of ill repute. Cf. Herrin 1983, 64-65.

[576] *Mir. St. Art.*, no. 43. Cf. Herrin 1983, 64-65, and note 30.

[577] Moschos, *Prat.Spir.,* chapter 81, (relates to the early 7th century).

[578] Herrin, 1983, 71-72, and Herrin 2013, 289-92.

[579] Cf. Kazhdan & Talbot 1991/1992, 391. According to Cormack 1997, *passim*, the strong female involvement in

connects devotion to icons, private religion and female piety, but further notes that icons found strong support among both men and women and that there was a public and a political side to their veneration as well.[580] They were not put up in churches merely for the benefit of female venerators or for private purposes. Even in its early phases, holy imagery displayed in churches was an integral part of communal religious worship and celebration. The public aspects exclude neither personal devotion to an icon nor private veneration outside the collective celebration of worship. Even so, such private acts of worship were performed in the public place in which an icon was displayed, carried out under the eyes of other devotees and thereby simultaneously underlining the individual's commitment to a certain practice of religious ardour. It is a question of where the demarcation line between private and public lies when an act of devotion is performed in a place that is accessible to all members of the congregation. In other words, to what degree does such an act have both a private and a public function for the individual and in the eyes of the surrounding community? The emphasis on such acts of veneration in the sources may signify that they also had public and social aspects.

More active and violent displays of devotion to icons are described in stories related to the beginning of the Iconoclastic controversy. Some narratives tell of resistance to the supposed removal of the icon of Christ from above the Chalke Gate in Constantinople by order of Emperor Leo III. According to later sources, in 726 the Emperor, who had iconoclastic sympathies, ordered the publicly displayed image to be removed. As a reaction to this, a group of people attacked the soldiers who were carrying out the order in an attempt to prevent the removal of the holy image. Different sources, the oldest from the early 9th century, present somewhat diverse accounts of this supposed event, which modern scholars now tend to see as an iconophile construction.[581] An interesting aspect of these stories is that women are not merely mentioned as passive sympathisers, they are depicted as active participants defending their beliefs and publicly demonstrating their iconophile sentiments. Several versions tell of women partaking in the action, some even portray a woman as leader of the group and as instigator of the resistance. The *Vita of Stephen the Younger*, written around 809 by the deacon Stephen, emphasises that it was "honourable women" who defended the image of Christ, but it does not mention any names.[582] The chronicler Theophanes, writing only a few years later, merely states that "the populace of the imperial city" attacked the perpetrators against the Chalke image, and does not specifically mention any women.[583] The *Synaxarion* of Constantinople,[584] a compilation of saints' lives following the ecclesiastic calendar, on the other hand, contains two different and more elaborate stories, both involving women. In one story of the 10th-century version

icon worship was, to some extent, an explanatory myth that was constructed later.

[580] Cameron 2006a, 104-105. Cf. Cormack 1997, *passim*.

[581] The main sources are from a later period and represent the victorious *iconophile* side, which may have wanted to overdramatise the initial phases of the controversy. There has been much debate on the historical reality and the facts of these events. The surviving legends also give somewhat diverse accounts. In any case, the narrative is strongly biased by pro-icon sentiments. Kazhdan & Talbot 1991/1992, 391-397, Cormack 1997, 39-43, Brubaker 1999, 260-9, 278-80, Auzépy 1999, 193-4, 203, 198-300, Brubaker & Haldon 2001, 71, 226-7, and Brubaker & Haldon 2011, 89-90, 123, 128-5. Cf. also Herrin 1983, 70-71, and Talbot 2001, 4-6.

[582] *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, chapter 10. Cf. Brubaker & Haldon 2001, 226-7, and Brubaker & Haldon 2011, 89-90, 129-30, Auzépy 1999, 193, and Kazhdan 1999, 186.

[583] Theophanes, *Chron.,* 6218 [AD 625/6]. Cf. Brubaker 1999, 262-3.

[584] See e.g. Brubaker & Haldon 2001, 205-6, and Efthymiadis 2011, 129.

of the *Synaxarion* it is a woman named Theodosia who leads a group of city women in the action. According to this account she and her female companions were summarily executed in the Forum of the Ox as punishment for their action.[585] The other version recorded in the *Synaxarion* describes how the image was defended by nine men, all named, and a single woman, the *patrikia* Maria.[586] In an earlier *passio* of the martyrs of Chalke, written in 869, Maria is described as the leader of the group, as in the story about Theodosia, but it is a group of men rather than women. In this version Emperor Leo was willing to pardon Maria because of her high-born status, but she chose to be executed alongside her companions.[587] It seems that this text later served as a source for the story of Maria in the *Synaxarion*, but the pro-icon tradition clearly expanded and mixed all the stories.[588]

Despite the mixed traditions and the ambiguous historical accuracy of the details, the stories show that the notion of female participation in public expressions of religious sentiments was feasible, even to the degree of partaking in public displays of pious indignation and violent protests against an act conceived of as an unholy undertaking.[589] Despite some trademarks of a *topos*, it cannot be excluded that they reflect some level of reality, and the stories relating radical female action show that such behaviour was not considered unthinkable if championing a just cause. It was in the interest of later iconophile writers to portray women as active participants and even leaders in actions against these postulated early iconoclastic desecrations.[590] Iconophile sources may have biased reasons in their portrayal of early events, and the notion of women as active adversaries of the icon destroyers certainly adds to the dramatic effect and underlines the urgency of the religious crisis, if even women have to take action. Even so, female involvement, although considered exceptional and out of character, was not inconceivable. Similar female aggression towards a hostile individual is described in 7th-century Thessaloniki, and is discussed in Chapter V.C. For these stories to be plausible to their audience a requirement was the experience that women were, at least to some degree, present on the streets and in public space, where they could act and react.

Scholars have largely discussed other less violent stories about female participation in the Iconoclastic controversy of the 8th and 9th centuries. Many of these represent passive resistance to the prohibition of icon veneration by the authorities, such as hiding icons in homes or helping iconophile monks and other people. The *Life of St. Stephen the Younger* relates how the iconophile wife of a prison guard provided food for the saintly man and the champion of icons while he was being held at the Praitorion prison in Constantinople. She also provided him with three icons for his veneration, which she had kept in a locked chest hidden from the authorities and from her husband.[591] Such stories convey a tradition of female involvement in the veneration of icons, supporting the view that it was an important aspect of female piety. In the view of Kazhdan and

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[585] *SynaxCP* 828-830. Cf. Brubaker & Haldon 2001, 230, and Auzépy 1999, 193-4

[586] *SynaxCP* 877-880. Cf. Auzépy 1999, 193-4.

[587] *AASS Aug. II*, 434-447. This text is carefully analysed in Auzépry 1990, especially 466-472.

[588] See e.g. the comments made by Kazhdan & Talbot 1991/1992, 392-394, and Cormack 1997, 39-43.

[589] Cf. Herrin 1984, 168-169, Herrin 1983, 70-71, Kazhdan & Talbot 1991/1992, 392-394.

[590] See Cormack 1997, 39-43, on possible iconophile motives for portraying women in a prominent role.

[591] *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, chapter 57. Cf. Kazhdan & Talbot 1991/1992, 395, Herrin 1983, 71, Tsironis 2000, 32.

Talbot, pro-icon sentiments among women were a reaction to the growing patriarchal tendencies in a troubled century.[592] Another way to see it is that iconophile sentiments reflected a conservative position in favour of tradition, locality and ideas rooted in the common people against innovation and the introduction of external influences: iconoclastic sentiments were connected to Near Eastern influences and an imperial dynasty with foreign roots. Such a viewpoint makes female involvement alongside male iconophiles an issue of class, cultural geography and clashing ideas rather than of gender. The stories show that the veneration of icons cannot be dismissed merely as private spiritual exercises for the female part of the population: on a symbolic level, icons also carried expressions of politics and publicly displayed devotion.

The above discussion on icons exemplifies one specific type of pious act, which later was highlighted because of the religious controversy it evoked in the 8th and 9th centuries. Devotion to icons was practised both in public and in private. Other religious functions, by their very nature, demanded the frequenting of public space. Both regular and more specific religious occasions were acted out more or less in public, participation in which, as well as being a pious exercise, demonstrated that those involved embraced certain societal religious practices. Religious devotion could also be shown through pilgrimage or donations, the visible results of which then continued to testify to the donator's piety: the latter depended on, among other things, social position and financial capacity.[593]

A. Religious celebrations

Religious celebrations included regular church services as well as processions[594] and celebrations on saints' feast days, baptisms and funerals, and other special ecclesiastic events, in all of which individuals either participated as members of the congregation or had some ceremonial function. The most common religious practices outside the home for both men and women involved church visits, either for a service or for private prayer. According to some scholars, going to church and engaging in other religious activities were among the few legitimate reasons for honourable women to venture outside the domestic sphere, and therefore were significant in terms of explaining female piety.[595] The expression 'honourable women' is indicative in this context. As I discuss later, women had also other opportunities to get out that were unrelated to religion, such as going to the baths. This is not to say that the church did not play an important role in providing an outlet for female activity outside the home. It also corresponded well with ideological guidelines for womanhood and the desired image of female piety.

Corippus' poem on the succession to the imperial throne of Justin II and his wife Sophia has a description of female church attendance and prayer that befitted the highest levels of society.

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592 Kazhdan & Talbot 1991/1992, 404.
593 Cf. Talbot 1997, 135-136.
594 On the role of imperial and ecclesiastic processions in public life and important processional routes and stations in Constantinople, see Berger 2001, 73, 86-7, and Brubaker 2001, 35-43.
595 E.g. Talbot 1997, 120, 132-134, Talbot 1994, 106.

Sophia visits a church for prayer as part of the accession ceremonies. The future emperor goes to pray in the church of the Archangel. To parallel his action Sophia goes to a church dedicated to *Theotokos*, which is a suitable choice for female supplication given that the Virgin Mary is the supreme female ideal and therefore the ultimate holy person for an empress to turn to.[596] The poem relates how "she [Sophia] blessed its [the church's] holy threshold and entered with joy and stood dressed in white before the pious face, holding out her hands and with her face cast down began this supplication".[597] Corippus then puts a prayer aimed at the Virgin into Sophia's mouth. After a *laudatio* to the Virgin, she continues: "You, glory of mothers, I beseech, and ask for your aid: may I always worship you and confess you as our Lady and the preserver of Justin's new rule. Honoured one, preserve our head, make safe our empire, rule our lives, complete what has been begun. Grant that all may progress well under our rule. /---/ May I always live under your protection."[598] Sophia is depicted in accordance with an ideal model of female religious devotion. At the same time her visit to the church is a public act, part of the ceremonial rituals of imperial accession. Both the visit and the prayer were integral to the future empress's public function. Further, not only is she devoutly praying for the forthcoming rule and the safety of the Empire, another aim may have been to publicly affirm her connection with established religious beliefs and important ecclesiastic institutions. This does not exclude personal religious fervour, although it cannot be determined based on the sources.

As part of the imperial family Sophia had a public position and her church visit, as described by Corippus, have features of a ceremonial function performed under public gaze. Other stories in the source material describe more mundane visits to church for prayer, but these women are also exposed to public gaze in various ways. One story is about a church virgin or nun[599] living an exemplary religious life in her home in Alexandria. She used to go to church to pray, but eventually had to restrain from it because a young man who was her neighbour took a fancy to her and pestered her with his declarations of love whenever she ventured out of the house to visit the church.[600] Although the story has the features of a *topos* - the chaste and pious woman who is harassed by undesired amorous attention - the setting portrays contemporary habits among church virgins. In the end, protecting her virtue and reputation and averting undesired male attention become more important than having the possibility to go to the church for the service and for prayer. Although the woman in question belonged to a category with the strictest demands of chastity, morality and gender segregation, there was no objection to her visits in public space for the purpose of prayer. The choice was not between chastity and exposure to public gaze *per se*: it was when her religious life came under threat and she became a temptation for others that she chose to refrain from devotion in a house of prayer, which required venturing into public space and so put her in a vulnerable

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[596] Cf. Cameron 1989b, 192. See Pentcheva 2006, 11-52, 189-90, on the imperial promotion of the cult of the Virgin Mary, and Herrin 2013, 169-70, on empresses' patronage of monuments dedicated to the Virgin Mary.

[597] Corippus *In laudem* II:47ff. (transl. A. Cameron).

[598] Corippus *In laudem* II:50ff.

[599] The text uses μονάστρια, translated by John Wortly as an anchoress. Different forms of religious ascetic life existed in the early Christian centuries and the nomenclature was not always consistent or coincident with modern usage. Different types of female religious *personae* are discussed further below.

[600] Moschos, *Prat.Spir.* chapter 60 (7th century).

position in terms of unwanted male advances and gaze. Restraint from going to church is presented as a deprivation that the pious woman endures.

The sources contain other stories about women attending church. A woman of high dignity (the mother of a bishop and a relative of Emperor Maurice) is spending the night praying in the church of Sts. Cosmas and Damian in Jerusalem.[601] The future saint Matrona partakes as a young wife in nightly vigils in Constantinople in the company of her spiritual guide Eugenia and a woman called Susannah.[602] The *Miracles of St. Artemios* also includes stories about attending night vigils. A man in the service of a prominent official did voluntary service in church, another man had attended night vigils and had sung hymns from a young age, and when the nine-year-old son of a poor widow named Sophia was cured she gave a promise to attend night vigils for the rest of her life.[603] The young Stephen is said to have accompanied his mother to night vigils.[604] Theodore of Stoudios mentions that his mother never missed midnight office.[605] Night vigils became increasingly popular from the 6th century onwards, especially in urban churches.[606] Further, there is a story in the *Life of St. Matrona of Perge* about two sisters of noble rank who lived in Constantinople and partook in the annual feast of the martyr St. Lawrence in the church dedicated to him. The sisters joined in the celebrations with all the other people receiving portions of holy oil and blessed bread.[607] According to the text the whole city gathered for the occasion, although this is a recurrent *topos* employed to underline the importance of an event. Nevertheless, it did mean that the celebration was well attended. The sisters accompanied each other, each the chaperone of the other in a way. The story does not mention servants, who customarily accompanied women of rank appearing in public space. These accounts show how visits were made in suitable company according to social rank, and they also confirm that visits to churches were considered *comme il faut* for all women in society, even with regard to night vigils and large assemblies. Some divorce laws set out in *Codex Justinianus* support this view. If a husband suspected his wife of infidelity, there were certain provisions for him to take court action against her, even if she was merely seen speaking to the suspected other man in a public place. The only exception was if the conversation took place inside a church, in which case the law did not grant legal grounds to take action.[608] Religious space thus guaranteed propriety for women.

The above-mentioned *vita* also tells how Matrona, together with nuns from the monastery in Emesa in Syria where she resided at the time, joined a procession to bring the newly found head of John the Baptist to an appropriate church. People from all around the region and its monasteries gathered for the occasion. The throng around the relic became so thick, as everyone wanted their

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601 Moschos, *Prat.Spir.* chapter 127 (7th century).

602 *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapters 2 & 8 (5th / 6th century).

603 *Mir. St. Art*., nos. 15, 18, 36 (7th century). See also Crisafulli & Nesbitt 1997, 246-7.

604 *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, chapter 8 (relates to the 8th century). On other men in nightly church service see e.g. Procopius, *Bell.* 1.24.10 (the *questor* John the Cappadocian), and Theophanes, *Chron*. 6095 [AD 602/3] (a calligrapher in Alexandria).

605 Theod. Stoud., *Laudatio*, § 4. (Funeral oration for his mother written between 797 and 802).

606 Krueger 2005, 297-300.

607 *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 38. (5th / 6th centuries).

608 *Nov*. 117, chapter 15 pr. & (1). Cf. Beaucamp 1990, 163-164.

share of the holy oil it emanated, that Matrona was prevented from moving away from the relic and became one of the distributors of the oil to the other venerators, including a blind man who was then cured.[609] The story gives a picture of male and female individuals, including women devoted to a religious life, attending the event together without discretion, congregating with the crowd around the relic.

A similarly jostling crowd is described in the *Life of St. Mary of Egypt*. At early dawn during the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross in Jerusalem, Mary sees people hurrying to the church at Golgotha and follows them into the courtyard. She tries to join them in the church to see and partake in what is happening, trying to force her way through the doors but constantly being pushed back. At first, she attributes her failure to enter the church to her female physical weakness. She mingles with some other people and tries even harder to enter, elbowing her way in. Eventually it is revealed to her that the failure is due to her sexually licentious and bad lifestyle, and the incident instigates her spiritual transformation.[610] Although there is doubt about the historical reality behind the person of St. Mary of Egypt, it does not diminish the vitality of the description, implying that such shoving, pushing and cramming among an eager crowd on special religious occasions cannot have been uncommon. These stories also indicate that men and women alike joined the crowds attending religious events.

Yet another description of a woman forcing her way through the crowd in a religious environment is given in the *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*. A woman living in Constantinople who has been suffering from an illness for ten years tries to get close to the visiting holy man to get his blessing. She is carrying an alabaster box of myrrh, hoping to anoint his feet.[611] This must be a woman of some distinction, otherwise she could hardly afford an alabaster box or the myrrh it contained. In her efforts to get close to the holy man she mingles with the cram of people surrounding him: they have all come to see him on one of his public appearances during his visit to the capital. The text is considered to be written by one of Theodore's disciples, who was relatively close to the events described, and it is full of what appear to be accurate details about the society it depicts.

In another episode the saintly man is attending an annual festival of the Mother of God in the village of Mousge, in Galatia Prima in Asia Minor. A woman named Eirene, who is described as possessed by a demon, throws off her cape and her covering outside and forces her way through the gathered crowd into the church, where she confronts Theodore and verbally assaults him, according to the text the doings of the demon inside her.[612] Eirene's conduct is, of course, totally opposite to proper public behaviour. Throwing off her cape and her covering in particular is an impropriety, contrasting sharply with social codes expecting women to cover themselves in a proper way in public, and underlines the indecorum instigated by the evil possessing her. Her behaviour is topsy-turvy, but nothing in the text suggests anything unusual about men and women being together in the crowd at the religious function. Most women at such gatherings were probably in the company

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609 *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 12. (5th / 6th centuries). Cf. Haldon 2007, 277, on the importance of physical contact with the relics of saints.

610 *Life of St. Mary of Egypt*, chapter 22 (written in the 7th century)

611 *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 96 (representing the first decades of the 7th century)

612 *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 71 (the story represents the last decades of the 6th century)

of some relatives and friends, often with their husbands. This is exemplified in a story about a married couple with at least one young boy attending a yearly religious festival celebrated at Theodore's monastery.[613]The *Life of St. Stephen the Younger,* in turn, tells a story about the future saint's parents and how they went to the inauguration of Germanos as patriarch of Constantinople in 715 when his mother was pregnant. Everyone was there to watch, and the throng of people was so dense that the pregnant woman hesitated and was prepared to leave. However, her husband, who had a sturdy constitution, forced his way through the crowd and managed to get them a good place from which to watch the ceremony.[614] Not all of the stories indicate in whose company the women went to these religious celebrations, but no specific gender segregation is hinted at. The women appear to be in the midst of the throng that seemingly included participants of both genders. Social rank rather than gender probably influenced how, with whom and where in the congregation women attended such gatherings.

These depictions of women mingling in the crowd during religious events deviate slightly from a report in the *Chronicon Paschale* on the arrival of the Holy Lance to Constantinople in the year 614. When Jerusalem fell to the Persians in that year the Holy Lance, among other relics, was saved and sent to the capital. According to the chronicle, when the relic arrived an announcement was made in the Hagia Sophia church on the Sunday morning that the holy relic would be exhibited for veneration the following week, on Tuesday and Wednesday for the men of the city and on Thursday and Friday for the women.[615] Everyone got equal opportunity to see the relic, but separate weekdays were assigned to men and women. This report depicts an occasion for the veneration of a relic that was arranged more orderly in contrast to the relatively chaotic scenes described in the previous accounts. Provision was made to keep the genders apart, although each was allotted an equal amount of time to behold this newly arrived relic, which must have awakened a lot of religious anticipation in the capital. Adamnan's account in Latin, written sometime after 670, refers to a somewhat similar arrangement. It mentions a three-day ceremony in which the relics of the True Cross are venerated by three successive groups: the Emperor and his soldiers, the Empress and women of the city and the Patriarch and the clergy.[616]

The reason for the contrast in the sources cannot be purely chronological in that the mentioned *vitae* span a period from the late-5th to the early-9th century. The difference is in the character both of the occasions described and of the sources. The display of the Holy Lance had a symbolic meaning and was arranged on a high official level to benefit the prestige of the state, which accounts for the careful staging of the occasion. Showcasing a relic can also more easily be spread over several days, whereas a religious feast in honour of a saint and the inauguration of a bishop are celebrated on the appropriate dates. *Chronicon Paschale*, like annals, briefly describes how the

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613 *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 112.

614 *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, chapter 5. In chapter 6 the husband accompanies his wife and baby to the Blachernai church to give thanks for the delivery of a son.

615 *Chron. Pasch,* AD 614 [p. 705]. Magoulias 1967, 251.

616 Adamnan, *De locis sanctis*, iii. 3 (228.21-7). Brubaker & Haldon 2011, 141, & n. 259, suggest that this specific account could reflect older sources and an early *Life* of Emperor Constantine I, and therefore does not accurately reflect the situation in the 7th century. However, comparison with *Chronicon Paschale* shows that it might.

showcasing was arranged, but does not give a detailed account, whereas *vitae* by their nature engage in a more lively narrative. The arranging of different days for men and women to view the Holy Lance must have been done exactly to avoid compelling women to be in a mixed crowd and forced to mingle with men. After all, it complied with mainstream ideology and this particular occasion was arranged on a highly official level by the societal strata that maintained the ideological views about proper female behaviour.

What these stories communicate is that not only were visits to churches and religious events acceptable conduct for women, they were also seen as a right. The arrangements for viewing the Holy Lance attest to this in ensuring equal opportunity for veneration among the female population. An ecclesiastic surrounding safeguarded otherwise easily questioned female virtue. Women of all social classes could partake in religious celebrations and visit churches. Nevertheless, women with a moral standard or some rank probably preferred to appear in fit company, such as with their husband, a male relative, or female associates.

The story of Matron and an episode in her *vita* about two noble sisters indicate that some husbands might have resented a too zealous religious devotion and frequent church visits by their wives, even to the point of trying to forbid them. They may have been concerned about potential opportunities for imprudence, or just felt that the wife was neglecting her domestic duties, or even feared losing her altogether to a religious way of life. According to Matrona's *vita,* her husband resented her recurrent church visits, suspecting her nightly vigils were a cover for promiscuity.[617] It should be noted that the husband is no hero in the story and his attitudes are not commended. In comparison, the mother in the *Life of St. Stephen the Younger* is depicted as taking part in night vigils with her young son, without any objections from her husband.[618] Back in the *Life of St. Matrona*, the husband of the noble woman Athanasia, one of the above-mentioned sisters, resents his young wife's religious devotion. His concern is more to do with fear that religious fervour will draw her away and make her neglect her duties to the family and her husband, rather than with immorality or a bad reputation.[619] Athanasia is wealthy in her own right, and later in the story her husband is presented as the villain, trying to steal some of her money. These conflicts have a domestic aspect, reflecting a husband's reluctance to give up the secular demands on his wife or the financial advantages she might bring. The husband who disallows is depicted as unjust, and the religious texts encourage all forms of female devotion. In the cases of Matrona and Athanasia a religious life also seems to provide the opportunity for legitimate escape from a disagreeable marriage.

There were some restrictions on women's mobility inside the ecclesiastic domain. Lay women were prohibited from entering the inner sanctuary, but that also applied to the male lay population.[620] On the other hand, it is revealed in an 8th-century manuscript that deaconesses were traditionally ordained in a similar way as deacons in the bema, which formed part of the sanctuary.

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617 *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapters 2-3 (5th / 6th centuries). Matrona was about 25 years old at this time, with a small daughter.

618 *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, chapter 5 (referring to the early 8th century).

619 *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 39. Athanasia was 18 years old at the time.

620 See e.g. Taft 1998, 32.

They also received communion alongside deacons there, hence on a spatial level at least they were treated as equal to their male counterparts.[621] *Didascalia Apostolorum* in the 3rd century and *Apostolic Constitutions* in the 4th already parallel deaconesses with deacons and give them a quasi-equal position.[622] The difference is that deaconesses were not allowed to minister to others.

With regard to the laity, some scholars assume that women in the early Byzantine period were already confined to galleries and side aisles while attending mass, and so were separated from the male congregation and the more central parts of the church, as was customary in later periods.[623] None of the aforementioned stories give any confirmation of this: women are depicted as participating in religious celebrations with the male population. This does not exclude possible praxis at church services for women to stay together, separated from men in one or several parts of the church building. Taft discusses at length the spatial positioning of women in church space during the Byzantine period. According to his scrutiny of available material, although there were attempts to keep the genders separate and there was a custom, especially in Constantinople, for women to follow church services from galleries or side aisles, other sources indicate that the segregation was never complete. Practices varied locally and over time. The galleries were also not exclusively used by women. Hence, although there was a tendency to keep men and women separated to a degree, segregation was not very severe: it was rather customary, and never strict enough to prevent contact between the sexes. The galleries, in particular, tended to be an area for larger groups of women. They were not excluded from the main floor of the church among the men of the congregation, however, although they may possibly have been separately in the aisles. A significant factor is the church building: its size and the provision of galleries or clearly separate aisles affected the extent to which women could keep to separate areas during services.[624] On an abstract level, if a division was made the northern, in other words the left, side, which could be considered inferior, was associated with the female and the south, or right side, with the male. This was the case, for example, in the 6th-century mosaics in San Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna representing rows of male and female martyrs, the females occupying the northern wall with the Virgin Mary and child.[625] The clearest case of gender separation among the above examples is that of different weekdays for beholding the Holy Lance. This was not a case of gender division inside a public space on a single occasion, but was rather a question of allowing for separate occasions in a single public space. It is therefore difficult to compare it with potential spatial gender segregation inside church buildings.

As mentioned earlier, there were restrictions prohibiting women from entering male monasteries, an ecclesiastic sphere from which they were theoretically excluded.[626] However, the *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon* includes several stories about women arriving at Theodore's

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[621] Taft 1998, 63-4, and Karras 2004, 275, 287-92, 297-300, on codex *Barberini Gr. 336* (mid-8th century).

[622] LePorte 1982, 112-7, 130.

[623] E.g. Herrin 1993, 72, who assumes that women were segregated from men early on.

[624] Taft 1998, specifically 31-37, 58-60, 63, 86-7.

[625] E.g. Deichmann 1958, Abb. 98-107. Cf. 6th-century mosaics from St. Demetrios in Thessaloniki: the pictures on the north wall had a strong female connotation, although too little is preserved of the overall picture scheme to judge if this was paralleled by a strong male connotation on the south wall. Cormack 1969, Plates 3-5, 7-9, and Brubaker 2004b, 72-8, 86, Fig. 3-5.

[626] See II.D, 81-2.

monastery to seek healing from the holy man, either for themselves or for their children, and occasionally staying several days.[627] It has to be assumed that they arrived at and stayed in an area connected to the monastery that was open to the public, such as a separate courtyard with a hostel or some area outside the enclosed monastic space. One story is about an annual procession involving men and women from the neighbouring villages. It came to the monastery on the Saturday after the Ascension of Christ, after which a feast was arranged in the vicinity. At least one church belonging to the monastery was open to the congregation and was used on this occasion.[628] The prohibition mentioned in the ecclesiastic regulations must have concerned closed-off inner areas that were strictly reserved for monks for purposes of abiding by the rules of an ascetic lifestyle. In another story Theodore endures one of his regular periods of seclusion, explicitly giving orders that no woman should be admitted an audience with him. A man with a possessed wife arrives at the monastery to have Theodore cure her and she smashes some candelabra in the church: on this occasion Theodore instead sends a servant to attend to the woman and remains in seclusion.[629] The *Life of St. Matrona* tells about a so-called freewoman[630] accompanying Matrona and her novice on their sea journey from Beirut back to Constantinople. She insisted on escorting them all the way to see abbot Bassianos in his monastery, under the rule of which Matrona was conducting her religious life.[631] The implication is that the women entered the monastery to meet Bassianos, but again one has to assume that he received them in a part of the complex in which such an audience was possible. Another story, in *Pratum Spirituale*, tells of female proselytes arriving at a monastery to be baptised. This was a centre for baptism, or baptismal functions were closely connected to it both geographically and functionally.[632] In early Byzantium there was a relationship between a holy place and provisions made for pilgrims and baptisms, especially of adults, by a monastic establishment founded there. The stories referred to above show that, although the ascetic dwellings were off limits, women did visit some parts of monastic establishments for different purposes.

Most female veneration was in the form of anonymous and private participation in events, as a member of the congregation or the celebrating crowd, but some women had more official roles. As long as the baptism of adults was common practice a deaconess had to be present to aid the female proselytes, although she was not allowed to perform any actual cult function.[633] This is clear from church canons, but the subject is also addressed in the form of unintentional data, as in a story

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[627] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, e.g. chapters 26, 35 65, 68, 103, 110. Cf. John of Ephesos, *Hist. Eccl*. 1.11, on religious controversy between Orthodox and Monophysite factions in the early 570s when Empress Sophia, as did her husband Justin II, entered monasteries to offer the monks gifts in attempts to persuade them to submit to orthodoxy. See also Garland 1999, 47, and Olster 1993,319-20. Krueger 2011, 33, on a 7th-century miracle story in which the Virgin Mary gives a sick female pilgrim licence to enter a male monastery at Choziba in Palestine.

[628] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 112.

[629] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 60.

[630] The word ἐλεύθεραι, translated by Featherstone as 'freewomen', is mentioned as also having the meaning of a 'widow' or 'wife' in this period, see Featherstone's note 74 on p. 40, in Talbot (ed.) 1996, *Holy women of Byzantium*. One might suppose that it indicates a respectable woman of what today would be called the middle classes, for whom an assignation used for the higher classes or nobility was not applicable.

[631] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 29.

[632] Moschos, *Prat.Spir.* chapter 3.

[633] Cf. Cardman 1999, 312-3, and Karras 2004, 277, 290-1.

related by John Moschos. A young and beautiful Persian woman came to the *coinobium* of Pentuklas to be baptised. The old priest who usually performed the ceremony, including spreading the holy ointment on the proselyte's body, felt too tempted by the beautiful woman and therefore withdrew. On previous occasions he had managed to resist temptation when anointing women before the baptism, but this time the old man was not capable of performing his task. Two days later the woman still had not been baptised and the archbishop contemplated allowing a deaconess to spread the ointment, but then decided against it because it was contrary to the custom.[634] The focus here is on the male failing to resist the enticement of a beautiful female body, but between the lines the story confirms the function of deaconesses as assistive but without liturgical capacities when baptising women. Similarly, when a young female pagan from Beirut became a proselyte and was to be taught and baptised, Matrona sent word to the bishop of that city to send her a priest, a deacon and a deaconess.[635]

Paganism continued to exist in the centuries after Constantine's edict, and baptising children was not yet the dominant practice. Even individuals growing up in Christian surroundings might make their final religious choice only after reaching adulthood.[636] Baptising an adult woman, as the story of the beautiful Persian girl shows, was not without complications. It included stripping off her old clothes, being anointed and immersed in the baptismal font, before being clad in the clothes of the newly baptised. The role of the deaconess in assisting at the act was part of the solution and essential in providing an appropriate setting for female proselytes.

Adult baptism began to yield ground to the custom of baptising children, which gradually became dominant in the 5th and 6th centuries. This diminished the role of deaconesses, as scholars have pointed out. Nevertheless, sources such as the above story confirm that society was not yet entirely Christian, at least not in more peripheral parts of the Empire, and adult baptism continued up the late 6th and possibly even the early 7th century. Moschos' collection includes another story about a woman who wanted to be baptised. She was a former rich girl from Alexandria who had fallen into poverty and into a sluttish way of life. Ill and close to death she sought to become a Christian and to be baptised.[637] The same source also refers to the baptising of children. One story tells of parents with their newly baptised children returning home from Jerusalem after Easter and on their way back to a village near Nikopolis.[638]

Although the increasingly common custom of baptising children diminished the role of the deaconesses in that their assistance was less needed, they kept other liturgical and pastoral functions. Valerie Karras considers that deaconesses could have had a role in bringing the Eucharist to

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634 Moschos, *Prat.Spir.* chapter 3 (6th century). Cf. Connor 2004, 170. See also Chapter III.D., 134-5.

635 *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapters 22 - 23 (represents events of the 2nd half of the 5th century, written in the 6th century)

636 Cf. Zacharias Scholasticus, *Vita Severii*, pp. 11, 37-39, 76-81. Lindblom 2008, 66-67, and Chuvin1990, 115.

637 Moschos, *Prat.Spir.* chapter 207. The story is set in the time of Patriarch Paul, elected in 536, although it was written in the early 7th century. The woman needed someone to speak on her behalf, but no one would help her due to her bad reputation. It seems that former prostitutes required a guarantor, as Bishop Nonnos states in another tale of a repentant prostitute, the *Life of Pelagia* from to the 5th century: "The canons of ecclesiastical order forbid the baptism of a prostitute without a guarantor lest she relapse back to her old ways." Constatinou 2005, 60, 80.

638 Moschos, *Prat.Spir.* chapter 165. Baptism during Easter was common practice in earlier centuries.

housebound female parishioners and to serve as chanters during service in the cathedral.[639]

Female participation in ceremonies at the end of human life also seemed continuously to have had significance. Some women were involved in funeral processions or as some sort of official mourners of the dead, a role they had already in Antiquity. Concurring with this association of women with death and mourning, Corippus presents in his poem the future Empress Sophia as the one in leading the arrangements for Justinian's funeral. She is portrayed as playing a prominent and active part in the preparations for the funeral of the previous emperor, and as guiding people who came to see the Emperor on his *lit de parade*:

> No less did his glorious consort [= Sophia] weep for the beloved father [=Justinian] of the empire, and piously grieve for the human lot. She added more gifts than was usual for her father's funeral, and told the people to file past in a close packed line. And she brought a pall interwoven with precious purple, where the whole series of Justinian's achievements was picked out in woven gold and glittered with gems.[640]

This portrayal of the new Empress as one of the chief mourners suits the picture of women as being involved in funeral preparations. Since pre-Christian times women had been preparing corpses for burial and had a prominent function as mourners at funerals.[641] As Talbot notes with regard to Byzantium, "women also assumed a prominent role at the time of the death of a family member", also describing women as "demonstrating their grief by wailing, tearing their hair, lacerating their cheeks with their fingernails, beating their breasts, and ripping apart their garments". She further points out that professional mourners could be hired, but that the Church did not always looked benevolently on such loud mourning practices and preferred funeral processions to be solemn and dignified, featuring choirs (of both men and women) singing psalms and funeral hymns.[642]

Female mourners feature in some of the illustrations in the *Wiener Genesis* manuscript. Three of them relate to funerals: two for the Old Testament Patriarchs Isaac and Jacob, and the deaths of Deborah and Rachel are depicted on the same page (Figs. 3 and 4a).[643] In all three the grieving women around the dead outnumber the men, and are depicted differently in terms of their

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639 Karras 2004, 277-8, 285.

640 Corippus, *In laudem*, I:272ff. (translated by Averil Cameron, 1976). See also, Cameron 1976, 140. Garland 1999, 42, briefly discusses the political aspects of this portrayal of Sophia.

641 E.g. Mustakallio 2003, 86, 89-91, 95. Cf. Herrin 2006, 8-10, 15, on imperial women providing for the proper burial of male relatives.

642 Talbot 1997, 134-5. Cf. Maguire 1977, 128-9, 131, on the articulation among early Church Fathers (especially John Chrysostom) of how it was inappropriate for Christians to show overwhelming grief with violent and public gestures when faced with death, and that more solemn expression was more in accordance with Christian beliefs. See also Burman 2002, 91-2, 95-6.

643 *Cod.Vindob.Theol.Graec*. 31., fol. 13 v (deaths of Deborah and Rachel), fol. 14 r (death of Isaac), fol. 24 v. (death of Jacob). Cf. Cameron 1976, 136, and Kitzinger 1963, 111-2. According to Maguire 1977, 129-32, in line with Christian theological writing violent or extreme gestures of mourning in Byzantine artistic renderings were largely reserved for Old Testament illustrations. More solemn forms of grief are depicted in scenes from the New Testament, with a few exceptions such as the mothers at the Massacre of the Innocent. Cf. also the mosaic in S. Maria Maggiore in Rome, Brenk 1975, 31.

demeanour. At least one woman in each illustration is portrayed with loosened hair, either lamenting with her hands thrown up in the air or beside Isaac's deathbed, tearing her hair. The women generally have a more sorrowful posture, crying over the bodies, whereas the men seem to show their grievance in a more restrained manner: none are present around the deathbed of Deborah, however. Corippus similarly describes women as showing their grief by letting their hair hang loose when Justinian's funeral procession passed through the streets of Constantinople: "Mothers walked with their hair loosened in grief; some were in front of the doors, others in the higher parts of the building filling the tall windows with their crowded numbers: /---/. Many burned pious incense for his passing. From all sides the sad people came running in their anxiety to look."[644] There are similar depictions of mourning in poems such as the one written for a dead young man named Agathonicus: "and his mother tearing her hair in her mourning beat herself, remembering, alas, the labour of her womb."[645] Loud lamenting and excessive displays of grief by tearing the hair and making similar gestures may not be a mere literary *topos*, and could relate to actual praxis. This is shown not only in the disapproval of such conduct by some Church Fathers, but also in Anna Comnena's *Alexiad*, for example, which describes such behaviour, and in other evidence suggesting that such practices continued in the Balkan area until at least early-modern times.[646] The loud lamenting is the women's part, which is shown by the different and contrasting way in which male mourning is portrayed in funeral poems, for example: men are usually described merely as shedding tears over their lost loved ones or with similar relatively composed expression.[647] These descriptions fit well with the illustrations in the *Wiener Genesis*. Other *topoi* for expressing female grief include drawing the veil over part of the face[648] or to shear one's hair[649]. Grief occasionally serves to explain and to excuse unconventional female behaviour such as appealing to the goodwill of the Emperor in the Hippodrome, or perpetrating violence against persons feared of causing harm to loved ones.[650]

Although mourning could be considered a private matter, there is an overt side to female displays of grief. Images of women letting their hair out in mourning, being wild with grief and loudly lamenting, underline the distress the death of that person evokes, as such behaviour was completely contrary to the assumed normal behaviour of women. When struck by the death of loved

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644 Corippus, *In laudem*, III:36ff.

645 *Anth. Gr.*, VII:574 (by Agathias, 6th century). Agathonicus was a law student, possibly studying with Agathias. Cf. *Anth. Gr.,* VII:608, in which a mother's grief is described as loud lamenting, and another example of a grieving mother in VII:611 (both by Eutolmius Scholasticus of Alexandria, probably in the 6th century)

646 Anna Comnena, *Alexiad* XI.12.2, XV.11.17, XV.11.20, Maguire 1977, 127-8. Cf. Burman 2002, 91-8 on mourning the dead and lamenting in the 4th and 5th centuries, and mourners gathering around the deathbed.

647 E.g. *Anth. Gr.*, VII:552, 556, 600-1. Magoure, 1977 *passim* discusses at length various postures and expressions of grief and sorrow in Byzantine art, with representations of both male and female figures, but does not speculate about any gender division between expressions of grief or mourning.

648 E.g. *Anth. Gr.*, II on statues of "Cerusa", "Ulysses and Hecuba" and "Pyrrhus and Polyxena" in the baths of Zeuxippos (by Christodorus of Thebes, early 6th century). The poems are about bronze statues, but the author interprets the gesture of drawing a veil in front of the face as showing sorrow or grief.

649 E.g. *Anth. Gr.*, VII:559 (by Theosebeia, probably the 6th century) and VII:593 (by Agathias Scholasticus, 6th century). Both refer to female deities or personifications tearing their hair in sorrow over the death of a person.

650 E.g. Corippus, *In laudem*, II:407-420, and *Mir. St. Dem*., II.1 [193] (Lemerle 1979, 174, 179). Incidents of female violence are discussed in Chapter V.C., 199-200.

ones the opposite of the regular was anticipated of women. The grief is not hidden, but is on display, emphasising the value of the deceased person and the sense of loss. On the collective level, one might suppose a correlation between the value of the loss and the number of people showing grief. Compare, for example, Corippus' description of Justinian's funeral in which he emphasises the great number of people showing their grief over the dead emperor.[651]

A mid-7th-century epitaph of Isaac, the military governor of the *exarchate* of Ravenna, which is preserved on a marble lid in San Vitale in Ravenna that once covered his sarcophagus, contains other expected *topoi* on female mourning and widowhood:

> Here lies the brave general, who, during eighteen long years,
> preserved Rome and the West intact for his serene sovereigns,
> Isaac, the ally of the emperors, the great ornament of whole Armenia -
> for he was an Armenian, from a noble family.
> Now that he has died with honour, his wife, chaste Susanna,
> sorely wails like the virtuous turtle-dove, bereaved of her husband,
> a husband famous for his exploits in East and West -
> for he commanded the armies of the West and the East.

The lamenting widow is described as chaste, virtuous and as faithful as a turtle-dove, which according to legend stays faithful to its partner even after death.[652]

Sources indicate that grief was not merely a private matter, and that ways of displaying it were evaluated by the community. There was a form of social etiquette that depended on the setting, which is illustrated in passage in the *Life of St. Matrona*. A young, married noblewoman named Athanasia, who desires to enter monastic life, loses her only child: "She did not lament greatly nor grieve in an unseemly manner, as is usual with women who love their children, but wept for it somewhat, so much as to demonstrate the appropriate natural feelings within her, neither suffering nor acting effeminately in any wise".[653] As a religious *exemplum* this text advocates the restrained display of grief, mainly to demonstrate the future monastic's already strong detachment from worldly aspects of life and from secular family ties. At the same time, it implies that, apart from personal feelings, some outward expression of grief was assumed and also evaluated by society. The display of grief therefore had a social side, whether it be to show it or to restrain it. Theodore of Stoudios thus portrays his mother as showing restraint in her bereavement when parted from her sons, both as children and as adults, as was considered fitting for a religious person. He points out that she did not utter any ignoble word, nor rent her garment, nor raise any shrieks.[654]

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[651] Corippus, *In laudem*, III:40-61. Cf. Burman 2002, 94, 97, on the deaths of the senator Volusianus and Emperor Constantine I.

[652] Lauxtermann 2003, 221-3. (Translated by Lauxtermann).

[653] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 41 (translated by J. Featherstone). Cf. Harré and Secord 1972, 138, noting that social "etiquette may extend not only to actions and facial expressions and the like, but may include feelings and emotions too." See also Mustakallio 2003, 86, and Burman 2002, 95-8.

[654] Theod. Stoud., *Laudatio*, § 7-8 (written around 797-802).

It is impossible to assess the balance between *topos* and practice in the female exhibition of grief, showcased by Corippus, the *Wiener Genesis* and religious texts, although the persistent survival of such depictions indicates some equivalents in praxis. Archetypes also work two ways. Depictions of archetypal female grief might inspire similar behaviour in practice. It should be safe to assume that melodramatic female grief paraded in public at least was feasible.[655] This does not mean that Corippus' report on Justinian's funeral has to be taken literally. It is, after all, a poetic rendering of events. It is impossible to verify to what degree the described public display of grief by ordinary citizens, especially women, reflected the reality, but given Justinian's high position, the narrative suited the expected picture, and this does not exclude the possibility that such an exhibition of sorrow transpired.

Some women had more public roles at this imperial funeral. Describing the funeral procession, Corippus mentions a choir of virgins next to the participating deacons.

> Without further delay he [the successor Justin II] ordered the bier to be lifted with his imperial nod, and the people left the whole palace, and the sad procession lit the funeral candles. Every sex and age met for the exsequies. Who can enumerate the wonders of so great a procession? On one side a venerable line of singing deacons, on the other a choir of virgins sang: their voices reached the sky.[656]

The language is archaic, making it difficult to determine exactly who comprised this choir of virgins, who were connected in some way to the ecclesiastic establishment. They could have been nuns or deaconesses, or women belonging to the old category of church virgins.[657] The latter were women who dedicated themselves to living a pious life and lived under the protection of the Church, not in a convent, though, but remaining in the family home or another private dwelling. There is some evidence of choirs of church virgins.[658] Averil Cameron, for her part, interprets the above text as referring to a choir of deaconesses.[659] Regardless of the interpretation, however, the role of these women corresponded to that of the deacons in the funeral procession, with a public ceremonial function akin to that of the male participants.

This portrayal of women duplicating a group of men in a procession has a parallel in an artistic representation from the same period. Mosaics on opposite sections of walls in the church of San Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna depict idealised groups of individuals. Twenty-six male martyrs are in procession along the south side wall of the church nave, corresponding to a procession of female martyrs on the north side wall. The male and female saints are presented in parallel and are

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655 Cf. Burman 2002, 97-80.

656 Corippus, *In laudem* III:36f. (translated by Averil Cameron). Cf. Burman 2002, 96, on the burial of Macrina (4th century): Gregorius of Nyssa, having criticised the lamenting of virgins, arranges for the women to sing Psalms with the virgins and the men with the monks.

657 Cardman 1999, 304-5, Thurston 1989, 23-5, 54-5, 62-6, 85-6, and LePorte 1982, 58-9, 70-1, 106. Different ecclesiastic personae are discussed below, in Chapter III.D, 133-143.

658 See LePorte 1982, 106-7, for a discussion on choirs of church virgins.

659 Cameron 1976, 181. Although evidence from earlier centuries, presented in LePorte 1982, 106-7, show that church virgins or nuns are as plausible an interpretation.

almost equal in number. The Magi in front of the Virgin Mary makes the available space on the north side slightly shorter, accommodating only twenty-two female figures (Fig. 7b).[660] The two lines of male and female saints duplicate one another as counterparts, giving the females a prominent and almost equal position in this ecclesiastical art representation.

There are various ways to interpret this. One is that art reflects practice, and that some women had official roles in public processions. Another, which does not necessarily exclude the first, is that art reflects an ideological idea that at least some groups of women could be seen as equalling their male counterparts in some respects. A third possible explanation, of course, is that it was only a question of aesthetics and a sense of symmetry, the need to parallel the male with the female. Corippus' rendering contains the aspect of a need for symmetry between the genders, but this seems to lean on and spring from more political ideas in that he constantly parallels the Empress with the Emperor throughout his long poem. This, again, does not invalidate the other two explanations. It rather seems that both the mosaic representation and Corippus' text combine all three aspects, in other words ideology, social practices and artistic ideas of symmetry. Although symmetry between male and female participants in religious processions might not have been occurring regularly, pictorial and textual art representations such as the ones mentioned functioned as models of female participation and displayed ideological views of a certain equal presence between the genders, possibly affecting attitudes to how processions were arranged.

On certain occasions, ecclesiastic women might organise small processions of their own. Mention is made in the *Life of St. Matrona* of how Matrona with her new small congregation of sisters relocated from temporary rented lodgings in Constantinople to a proper convent. The narrative makes it clear that this was not a mere change of residence, going from one place to another. The event was given symbolic meaning and prestige in the form of a procession. Tapers were lit, and quiet and solemn psalmody accompanied Matrona and her sisters as they transferred to their new dwelling.[661]

For the most part, however, women, like the majority of men, appear as participants among crowds of lay people, part of the congregation in religious processions, for example. This is the case with many tales in the *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon,* which refer to religious processions staged by the saint or have him attending some annual festivity including a procession.[662] On other occasions women were part of the audience, spectators watching ceremonies and processions from suitable places, be it in the church or from the windows, balconies and doorways of their houses. As mentioned above, Corippus describes how crowds of women gathered by the windows and on the doorsteps of their houses to watch Emperor Justinian's funeral procession.[663] Nikephoros also mentions that crowds had gathered to watch when describing an incident during the funeral

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[660] Deichmann 1958, Abb. 98-107, 120-35, Deichmann 1969, 30-1, 173, 199-200, Deichmann 1974, 149-150. von Simson 1948, 81-9, pl. 30, 34, 38-9, 42-4. This part of the mosaic dates to 561. Cf. Talbot 2001, 1-2, whose main point, however, is that female saints are treated as a separate entity.

[661] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 36.

[662] E.g. *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapters 36, 43 - 44, 51, 52, 64, 66, 71, 112-115, 127, 128, 134.

[663] Corippus, *In laudem*, III:36ff.

procession of Emperor Heraklios' first wife Eudokia.[664] The so-called Trier ivory is an artistic equivalent (Fig. 8b): it depicts an imperial procession with a relic arriving at a church and spectators gazing out from the windows of a large building in the background.[665] L. J. Wilson is of the opinion that no other women are depicted apart from the Empress, arguing that female figures would have been depicted veiled, which none of the figures seem to be as far as one can tell from the not-too-well-preserved depictions of the spectators.[666] In my opinion, the overall *habitus* of the figures at the windows could be female, despite their lacking veils, but regardless of gender, the image is an interesting rendering of a religious procession with spectators along the route.

Most individuals, men and women alike, participated in religious celebrations in a private capacity, albeit in public space under the gaze of fellow participants. Many opportunities for expressing piety were connected to public space. Although icons could be venerated in private dwellings, other types of religious devotion required a public presence. Further, although icons could be kept in private houses, most of them were in public places, predominantly churches. The Iconoclastic period prohibiting icons was an exception, although they were produced even then.[667] Their veneration demanded a visit outside the private sphere. The same was true for holy relics, which were displayed and venerated in a similar fashion. Attending mass or participating in the Eucharist usually required venturing into an ecclesiastic building, although as previously mentioned, religious rituals were occasionally arranged in private dwellings. Some religious events always took place outside the domestic sphere. Religiosity therefore had a place in the network of social codes of public behaviour. Even if there may be doubts about the historic accuracy, the hagiographies and miracle stories reflect contemporary realities regarding the social context and social interaction. Their descriptions of participation in religious events show a reality beyond the ideals of gender segregation. Some of them depict men and women mixing in throngs of people, everyone eager for the spiritual experience, indiscriminately shoving and pushing their way through the crowd.

Some women who either belonged to the higher strata of society or were connected to religious institutions had more visible roles or participated more actively in the different ceremonies. Although only few were in a position to play a more active part, women of all categories seemed to be present at religious events in public space. As worshippers, they had to balance between private veneration and public religious activity. Given the demands on female prudence, one might assume that religious activities in the private sphere were more common among women than among men, but it is clear that a large proportion of the female population engaged in religious activities in public space, regardless of their social standing. Women were not excluded from any form of religious devotion nor were they frowned upon for their participation, even if it took them into public space where they inevitably came into some contact with male strangers. As a form of moral protection they could keep suitable company, escorting one another, for example.

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[664] Nikephoros, *Brev.* 3.

[665] See e.g. Volbach 1976, 95-6, No. 143 and Taf. 76, and McClanan 2002, 24-6, and fig. 1.2.

[666] Wilson 1984, 603-4. For a discussion on the Trier ivory, see Chapter V.C, 195, also VI.A, 206, VII.C, 241.

[667] The treasures of Mt. Sinai also contain icons that may have been made during the centuries when the Iconoclastic controversy continued, including an icon of St. Eirene (icon B.39), Weizmann 1976, 57-79, (icons B.32-50), Brubaker & Haldon 2011, 320-36.

B. Pilgrimage

One aspect of religious life related to pilgrimage and visiting holy persons. There was an increase in pilgrimage to the Holy Land and to shrines in the eastern Mediterranean in the second half of the 6th century.[668] Although men are in the majority among individuals who attained a reputation of holiness, and presumably also among people making a pilgrimage to holy places, there are many stories about women participating in such activities.[669] Religious sources such as accounts of saints' lives are filled with tales of men and women visiting holy places or the dwellings of holy persons for different purposes, such as prayer, feasts, blessing or a cure, or to give thanks.

Some stories refer to wives as either accompanying or being accompanied by their husbands when visiting a holy person. One account in *Pratum Spirituale* mentions a scribe boarding a ship in Constantinople with his wife and retinue to visit Jerusalem and to pray there.[670] Another story tells of a man arriving with his wife at the dwelling of a holy man in a village in Phoenicia, asking him to cure his wife's breast cancer.[671] The *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon* contains many accounts of married couples seeking a cure from the holy man, often for the wife. Typical of this hagiography are the many references to evil spirits afflicting people, many wives being plagued in this way, although common physical ailments are also mentioned.[672] For example, the cleric Solomon from the city of Heliopolis and his wife visit Theodore in the monastery in Sykeon. After a short stay both spouses are healed from being troubled by evil spirits. The husband donates a picture, presumably an icon, to the oratory where they slept during the cure in the church of the Archangel in the monastery.[673]

Other chapters concern village women arriving with their husbands to be cured by Theodore. A woman from the neighbouring village of Kalpinus came with her husband to be rid of a demon said to have been cast upon her by a man from the village of Mazamia who was skilled in sorcery. The couple returns home with a temporarily pacified demon, but Theodore eventually receives the woman in the church of the Archangel and she becomes free of it during the week she stays there: she then travels back home with her husband.[674] On another occasion, a husband and wife arrive while Theodore is in his annual period of seclusion during which he has instructed that no women get admission to see him. A servant is sent to expel the evil spirit in his place, anointing the woman,

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668 Krueger 2005, 302-10.

669 Cf. Talbot 2002, *passim*.

670 Moschos, *Prat.Spir*. chapter 174.

671 Moschos, *Prat.Spir*. chapter 56.

672 Cf. Browning 1981, 122, noting that many of the patients treated by so-called 'low-level' saints in different hagiographies seem to be suffering from some sort of hysterical paralysis.

673 *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 103 (relating to the end of the 6th century).

674 *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 35 (relating to the mid-6th century). Cf. Messis 2006, 625-35, 645-6, on erotic magic, noting that 'aggressive' magic was usually ascribed to men or 'masculine' women, such as prostitutes and a-sexual old women, whereas the type of magic reserved for women focused on attachment and security.

who is raging in the church and smashing the candelabra, with consecrated oil.[675]

In one episode a small boy is badly injured by steaming hot water during festivities at the monastery and his parents bring him before Theodore to be cured.[676] During Theodore's second visit to the capital he is invited to the house of the patrician and *curopalates* Domnitziolous in Arcadianae where he also blesses the patrician's wife Eirene, who is childless, and promises her three sons in the future.[677] Here the situation is reversed: the holy man is invited into the domestic sphere to see the wife rather than the wife travelling to seek a cure, but this is the nobility in Constantinople.

A childless couple seeking out a holy person for the purpose of blessing and prayers to receive a child is another recurring theme. The *Life of St. Anthousa* tells of a soldier and his wife who seek a saintly woman for this purpose, and the *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon* contains several similar stories.[678]

There is not always an escorting husband, however, and women also arrive seeking cures for a child. Two ladies of senatorial rank travel all the way from Ephesus, accompanied by a large retinue of servants, to present their afflicted children. Travelling in each other's company and with servants ensured that such high-ranking women were keeping proper company. One of them was with her 20-year-old son named Andreas, who was dumb, and the other with her eight-year-old daughter who was paralysed: both were cured after a few days' stay in the monastery.[679] Other examples include a dumb boy brought by a woman, and a boy who was unable to walk travelling with his mother: both were cured during Theodore's visit to the monastery of Druinoi in Galatia.[680] During one of his visits to Constantinople an eight-year-old girl who had taken the monastic habit and had been dumb for three years is brought to Theodore by her female teacher in the convent.[681] Theodore also cures the four-year-old blind daughter of a woman living close to the holy man's quarters in Constantinople: she had previously been cured by Theodore after having been paralysed and lying in bed for seven months.[682] The narratives are not only about women bringing children before Theodore, and there are several stories about men arriving with afflicted children.[683]

The *Miracles of St. Artemios* describe people coming to the church of St. John the Baptist in

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[675] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 60 (related to the end of the 6th century).

[676] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 112 (related to the end of the 6th century).

[677] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 140 (related to the early 7th century).

[678] *Life of St. Anthousa of Mantineon*, 19 (SynaxCP 851) (related to the 2nd half of the 8th century), *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapters 93, 145, 148. Cf. also Moschos *Prat.Spir.*, chapter 114.

[679] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 110 (related to the end of the 6th century).

[680] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 65 (related to end of the 6th century). Cf. Talbot 2002, 78-80, on more stories of women visiting male saints or their shrines either for their own ailments or for their children, e.g. St. Symeon the Younger (6th century, near Antioch) and the shrine of St. Artemios (7th century, Constantinople).

[681] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 95 (related to the end of the 6th century).

[682] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 83 (related to the end of the 6th century).

[683] A dumb boy travels with his father from Ancyra to attend a church service in Anastasioupolis, where Theodore was bishop at the time. When Emperor Maurice's child is ill, Theodore is called upon while he is in Constantinople. Others brought by male relatives include a child with crooked feet and an 18-year-old youth injured in a hunting accident three years earlier. The nephew of Florentius, chief elder in Sandos, is also brought before Theodore. *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapters 61, 97, 107, 111. Cf. the mosaic in St. Demetrios in Thessaloniki, depicting a male person presenting a youth in front of the saint, e.g. Brubaker 2004b, 66-7, 85, & Fig. 8.

Constantinople to be cured by a departed saint. Given that St. Artemios was specialised in matters to do with the male genitals most patients were male, but there are several stories of women going to the church with their afflicted male children and staying for a longer time to get a cure, which usually meant sleeping in one part of the church.[684] One story tells of parents bringing their seven-year-old son to the church to be healed. In another a betrothed girl with a hernia spends two weeks in the church with her mother, and is eventually cured by St. Artemios' female 'assistant', St. Febronia, who had a chapel in the same church.[685] Only three stories mention a father and his son arriving together. As Leslie Brubaker and John Haldon note, the combination of mother and son is particularly common in the *Miracles of St. Artemios*.[686] When the noblewoman Sergia seeks a cure for her son they are not accommodated in the usual northern aisle of the church but stay in a room to the right of the upper gallery.[687]

Pictorial equivalents of such stories are to be found in religious artwork commissioned either as thanksgiving for the healing of a child or as supplication for heavenly protection. On the upper part of a 7th-century icon of St. Peter are portraits of what is possibly a mother and her cured son placed on either side of Christ.[688] The church of St. Demetrios in Thessaloniki had previously several mosaics from the late-5th to the 7th centuries in which children are being presented before the saint. The most prominent of these is a series of four scenes in which a girl, at one point called Maria, is presented before St. Demetrios and the Virgin Mary by her mother and other, mostly female, family members.[689]

Other women are mentioned in the *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon* as being cured by the saint. One is from the village of Konkatis, suffering from a malady in her womb and already of some age, as she has an adult son who is a school teacher in the village of Mossyna.[690] Another is a paralytic woman brought to Theodore on horseback on a pack-saddle.[691] The woman suffering from an issue of blood who came with a box of myrrh in an attempt to meet with Theodore in Constantinople has already been mentioned, as has the woman named Eirene who was possessed by an evil spirit and raged in the church during mass.[692] There are also stories of three slaves visiting him in Constantinople: a slave-girl afflicted by an evil spirit for 28 years, brought to Theodore by her master; a slave-woman possessed by an evil spirit for 13 years; and a slave-girl named Theodora made dumb by a demon, who belonged to a deacon named Theodore.[693]

Men were equally likely to seek cures for their maladies from Theodore.[694] There are

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[684] *Mir. St. Art*., nos. 12, 28, 31, 36, 42, 43, 45.
[685] *Mir. St. Art*., nos. 10, 24. On St. Febronia see Crisafulli & Nesbitt 1997, 13-14.
[686] *Mir. St. Art*., nos. 4, 33, 35. Brubaker & Haldon 2011, 57. Cf. Efthymiadis 2004, 20.
[687] *Mir. St. Art.*, no. 31.
[688] Brubaker 2010, 40-2, Fig. 3.5 (icon B.5: St. Peter), & Figs. 3.6-7, and Maguire 2007, 144, Fig. 31.
[689] Hennessy 2003, *passim*. Cormack 1969, 31-7, 45, Pls. 3-5, 7-9. According to Brubaker 2004b, 64, 72-5, 85, they represent four different girls. Cf. Brubaker & Haldon 2011, 36, 57, Brubaker & Cunningham 2007, 248-9.
[690] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 26 (related to the mid-6th century)
[691] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 68 (related to the end of the 6th century)
[692] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapters 96 & 71 (related to the end of the 6th century). See Chapter III.A, 107.
[693] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapters 84, 92, 94 (related to the end of the 6th century).
[694] E.g. two lepers, one the priest Epiphanius from the village of Dioskones; a priest and a monk; a sailor and a

occasionally stories of whole villages afflicted by some evil, in which cases the holy man was brought to the village to cure the affected men, women and children.[695]

One of the central stories in the *Life of St. Stephen the Younger* is about a childless widow who travels seemingly alone from Constantinople to Mount Auxentos, which is visible from the capital but on the Asian side on the coast of Bithynia. Her aim is to be spiritually guided by Stephen and to enrol in the convent situated there as a nun called Anna.[696] When the holy man was exiled to an island in the Sea of Marmara not only did his disciples come to him, his mother and sister, who had lived in that same convent on Auxentos, also left it to join him.[697] Others travelled on different occasions to the island to be healed by Stephen, including a mother with a nine-year-old child that was possessed by an evil spirit, and an honourable woman from the town of Herakleia in Thrace who had suffered haemorrhaging for seven years and, after hearing of Stephen's wonders, eagerly asked for directions to reach him.[698] A blind man living on the island and a wounded soldier were also among those who were healed by Stephen and his miraculous icon.[699]

The stories reveal that both men and women sought assistance from famous spiritual persons. Sometimes they travelled long distances, on other occasions they seized the opportunity when such an individual was in the vicinity or invited him or her to a place to receive help. Most of the women described in the *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon* were from places relatively close to where Theodore happened to be at the time, either in his monastery in Sykeon, as bishop in Anastasioupolis, or on his visits to Constantinople.[700] There are some exceptions, such as women of senatorial rank travelling from Ephesus. On the other hand, these females represent most levels of society, from high-ranking ladies to village women and slaves. Many of them are accompanied, be it by their husbands, servants or other known persons, male or female. Not all of the stories mention any company, however. This does not necessarily imply that the women travelled alone: the author may not have considered such details of any relevance to the story.[701]

A typical feature in the *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon* is what could be called short-distance

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wrestler in Constantinople; Stephen, bishop of Cadossia; the cleric Solomon from Heliopolis with his wife, and a man from the village of Salmania; the blind cleric treasurer from the neighbouring town of Sebasteia; the sea captain Theodoulus from Kalleoi in Pontus. *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapters 31, 81, 87, 88, 102, 103, 122, 123.

695 E.g. the harvest is affected by hailstorms destroying the vineyards several years in a row, or by beetles eating summer crops, or other disasters, such as flooding, destroy half the village. Several of the stories refer to inhabitants affected by evil spirits, usually set loose by the digging or removal of ancient stones, and Theodore has to cure a large proportion of the village population. *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon,* chapters 43, 52, 114-118, 141.

696 *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, chapter 21 (related to the late 8th century). Auzépry 1997, 10. Cf. Kazhdan 1999, 188-91, on the importance of the theme of Anna in the story of St. Stephen.

697 *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, chapters 45-7.

698 *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, chapters 50-1.

699 *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, chapters 49, 54.

700 Cf. Talbot 2002, 77-8, discussing the cult of St. Thekla in the 4th to the 6th centuries.

701 Some 45 individuals mentioned in 38 of the chapters of the *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon* approach Theodore for a cure, on top of which are several stories involving cures, miracles or prayers. 16 are men and 15 are boys, some of which are accompanied by their fathers but four are brought by a mother or in the case of a slave the mistress. One boy is brought by both parents. Eleven women are mentioned, four of which are with their husbands. Three are accompanied by others, whereas in two cases no specific mention is made of company. Three girls are mentioned, one being brought from a convent by her female teacher and two are slave-girls and no company is mentioned.

pilgrimage, in other words visiting a holy person residing in the vicinity or the district.[702] Narrations about longer-distance travel also describe a variety of constellations. As mentioned above, the wife of a scribe set out with her husband and household on a pilgrimage from Constantinople to Jerusalem.[703] Other stories tell of women of rank travelling to or visiting holy places without their husbands. Although the texts do not always give any clear indication, it could be assumed that these women travelled with servants and other companions.[704] John Moschos provides several examples. One is of a senator's wife travelling to the Holy Land and eventually settling for a while in Caesarea. She asks the bishop there to select a local nun as a companion in her pursuit of a spiritually pleasing life.[705] Another story tells of Kosmiana (or Kassiane), the wife of the patrician Germanos, who is living in Jerusalem. One night she wanted to go to the church of the Holy Grave to venerate alone but, belonging to the Monophysites sect she was, according to the (Orthodox) text, miraculously refused entry into the church by an apparition of the Virgin Mary. Only after she summoned a deacon and took holy communion with the Orthodox did she gain access.[706] The story shows similarities to that of Mary of Egypt who, when visiting Jerusalem, is prevented by the Virgin from entering the church at Golgotha due to her impurity.[707] Derek Krueger discusses *Theotokos* as a regulator of women's access to sacred space in 7th-century Palestine.[708]

In a third account by Moschos the niece of Emperor Maurice is in Jerusalem for a year, staying with a relative, Amma Damiana, mother of Athenogenes, the bishop of Petra. The story tells of how Amma Damiana alone and the two women together visited the church of Sts. Cosmas and Damian, among others.[709] These stories can be compared with tales about pilgrimages to the Holy Land made by imperial ladies such as Empress Eudocia in the 5th century.[710] Not all female pilgrims were wealthy women. John of Ephesus tells of Maria, who had chosen the life of a Christian virgin and, at a ripe age, finally decided to travel from her home town Tella d-Mauzlath to Jerusalem. She settles in and around the church at Golgotha, where she lives on alms for three years, dedicating her time to prayer. When people start to perceive her as a holy woman and seek her blessing she flees back to her former life but goes back to Jerusalem to pray once every year for the rest of her life.[711] Pilgrimage continued in various forms even after the Arab conquests. The *Life of Stephen the Sabaite*, written by Leontios of Damascus shortly after 807, tells of two women from Damascus who regularly made pilgrimages to Jerusalem and Mt. Sinai.[712] Furthermore, a late-7th-century papyrus from Nessana contains a letter from the governor to the local people asking them to assist

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[702] Cf. Talbot 2002, 73.
[703] Moschos, *Prat.Spir*. chapter 174. (from the late 6th / early 7th centuries) See Chapter III.B, 119. Also, VII.B, 238.
[704] Cf. Talbot 2002, 74-5, 80, for some examples and similar remarks.
[705] Moschos, *Prat.Spir*. chapter 206. Cf. Talbot 2002, 74-5.
[706] Moschos, *Prat.Spir*. chapter 48.
[707] *Life of St. Mary of Egypt*, chapter 22 (written in the 7th century), see above, Chapter III.A, 106-7.
[708] Krueger 2011, *passim.*
[709] Moschos, *Prat.Spir*. chapter 127.
[710] See e.g. Connor 2004, 62.
[711] John of Ephesus, *Lives*, chapter 12, (6th century) (translated by S.P. Brock & S. Ashbrook Harvey, 1987, 124-5).
[712] Life of Stephen the Sabaite, published in *Acta Sanctorum*, Jul. III, 557 col. 133.

his wife Ubayya and equip her with a guide on her road to Mt. Sinai.[713]

There are recurring references in the sources to women, especially those of higher social status, accompanying each other while visiting holy sites or religious personae. In addition to the patrician women in the Holy Land and the ladies of senatorial class visiting Theodore in Sykeon, there were the previously mentioned two sisters in Constantinople visiting a religious festival and, later, Matrona in her convent.[714] Women of rank could be accompanied by servants, but not all women had the financial means or the opportunity for that. On the other hand, any woman had the possibility to benefit from the company of other women while on pilgrimage regardless of their social position. Matrona, who was married to a man who probably held an imperial office, but left him for the monastic habit, made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. She is described as seeking suitable travelling companions, supposedly other pilgrims, and setting out for Mt. Sinai.[715]

Journeying together seemed to be customary both for male and female pilgrims. It is mentioned in the text that when young Theodore made his first pilgrimage to Jerusalem he found someone else who was anxious to make the same journey and took him as his companion.[716] The holy woman Susan tells John of Ephesus how she "chances upon a large caravan of women and men travelling to Jerusalem" when her inclination towards piety made her run away from home as a child to make a pilgrimage there.[717] The company of other pilgrims meant both security and the protection of decorum, especially among female travellers. Another tale involving a group of women travelling together is that of Matrona going with other nuns from the convent in Emesa to witness events related to a relic of John the Baptist.[718] Pilgrims gathering for the journey are also mentioned in the tale of Mary of Egypt: she joins a group of pilgrims setting out by boat from Alexandria to Jerusalem.[719] However, in this case it is not to protect her virtue. Mary is depicted as taking advantage of the situation to continue her licentious life, seducing the young men among the travellers and using sex to pay for her passage. The aim of the story is to contrast her early life with her later religious transformation. Even so, embarking alone on a boat under the pretext of joining other pilgrims is not a problem: it is her promiscuity and use of sex for currency that is judged in the story.

Women not only went to holy places and persons. Some are presented as being sought out for their famed holiness. Matrona is one example. When she was living as a recluse and ascetic in an abandoned temple outside Beirut, people started to visit her as her fame as a holy person spread. Both men and women came to see her, but especially noblewomen.[720] Among these was a woman and her daughter Sophronia. Sophronia was so moved by Matrona's way of life that she insisteds on

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[713] Kraemer 1958, 207-8, papyrus 73, possibly dated Dec. 683. Brubaker & Haldon 2001, 58, and Brubaker & Haldon 2011, 322.

[714] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 38 (5th / 6th chapters), see Chapter III.A,106.

[715] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 14. Her travels in the Holy Land (Emesa, Jerusalem, and Mt. Sinai) are also mentioned in chapter 24. Cf. Talbot 2002, 74, 80.

[716] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 24. Cf. Talbot 2002, 74.

[717] John of Ephesus, *Lives*, chapter 27, (6th century) (translation by S.P. Brock & S. Ashbrook Harvey, 1987, 134).

[718] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 12. See also, Chapter III.A, 106.

[719] *Life of St. Mary of Egyp*t, chapters 19 - 21.

[720] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 19.

staying with her and becoming one of her first disciples. Many of those going to the temple to see Matrona are referred to as still pagan, which is not inconceivable in a late-5th-century context in the area of Beirut.[721] Other daughters of pagan families followed in Sophronia's footsteps. One took off, unknown to her family, with women from the city on their way to see Matrona.[722] Again, women are described as constituting each other's company. All in all, eight female converts are mentioned, who are sent by Matrona to the bishop of Beirut to be baptised. She continues to be their spiritual teacher and they would become the core group in her future convent back in Constantinople.[723]

Later, Matrona is sought out in Constantinople by people who were aware of her fame as a pious and blessed person. The women in whose company she travelled from Beirut to Constantinople insisted on knowing where she would settle so as to be able to visit her again.[724] Once established in the capital, she receives not only high-ranking women such as the noble sisters mentioned earlier,[725] but also Empress Verina, wife of Leo I, and Euphemia, the wife of the former West Roman Emperor Anthemius.[726] Matrona was seen as a model of piety, but she was also a spiritual teacher of young female disciples. She is further described as a healer. Euphemia therefore encourages her ill friend, the patrician lady Antiochiane, to visit her.[727]

Although the majority of Matrona's visitors mentioned in the text were women, some remarks indicate that men also sought an audience with this famous holy woman. Both men and women are mentioned as flocking to see her when she was living outside Beirut. Matrona's husband, who opposed her flight to an ascetic life, found out she was residing in a monastery in Emesa. He tried to reach her without her realising it so that she would not escape him again, giving as a pretext to some women that he was a supplicant wanting to pay reverence to the blessed Matrona.[728] Thus, it was not unthinkable for men to visit saintly women. This becomes clear in John of Ephesus' tale about the holy woman Susan. He was among the men visiting her in her convent during her later years, and taking spiritual guidance from her.[729] The *Life of St. Mary of Egypt* provides a comparison. The monk Zosimas realises the spirituality of the now old Mary, living an ascetic life in the Trans-Jordanian desert. He expresses regret over not being able to follow her continuously, benefit from her piety and look upon her holy face, calling her a spiritual mother.[730] Unlike in the case of Matrona,

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[721] Cf. the *Life of Severus* (5th century), p. 217-8: he is baptised as an adult when stepping into ascetic Christianity, which was not uncommon in intellectual circles in the area. This does not imply that the person was not previously inclined towards Christianity, or that the family was pagan. Society was not yet Christianised throughout. Instances of paganism and magical practices occurred even in the 6th and 7th centuries, e.g. *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 35 (see above, 118) and Theophylact, *Hist.* 1.11. Cf. Magoulias 1967, 230-246, and Chuvin 1990, *passim.*

[722] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 20.

[723] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapters 20 - 23 & 30 - 31.

[724] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 3.

[725] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapters 38 - 39. The younger, Athanasia, became a follower of Matrona. Cf. Topping 1988, 221.

[726] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapters 32 - 33.

[727] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapters 33 - 34. Cf. Topping 1998, 217, 220. On women as spiritual teachers, see Constantinou 2008, *passim*.

[728] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapters 33 - 34.

[729] John of Ephesus, *Lives,* chapter 27 (6th century) (translation by S.P. Brock & S. Ashbrook Harvey, 1987, 139-41).

[730] *Life of St. Mary of Egypt*, chapters 13 - 14, 36.

however, none but Zosimas is aware of Mary's holiness during her lifetime, and she is depicted as a recluse hidden from others following her withdrawal to an ascetic life. Matrona, in turn, is described as a famous public figure.

Although women are relatively rare as religiously renowned individuals compared with their male counterparts, they frequently feature in the texts among the crowds at holy sites and around persons with a holy reputation. Although it was possible to invite ecclesiastical persons and ascetics into the domestic sphere, seeking their help usually entailed a visit to where they resided. As shown above, women did have the opportunity to visit holy sites and to seek help from those with a spiritual reputation. Many of the stories refer to women as being accompanied in some way, the impression being that they generally sought some sort of company on such journeys and visits, be it a husband, a male relative, other women or servants, depending on the woman's social position. Here the stories vary widely. In sum, the sources indicate that women took an active part also in this side of religious life and, within certain required boundaries of propriety, frequented public space for such purposes.

C. Donations and charity

Other religious activities, often entailing public visibility, included different kinds of financial investments in religious establishments. Donating to such establishments had been part of social behaviour since antiquity. It enabled both men and women to show their religious affiliation and gratitude, as well as their piety and devotion. At the same time, a donation, especially when on a larger scale and made by an individual of wealth, was a manifestation of the donor's social status and significance in society. As Christianity became the dominant religion, the Church became an important part of society. One significant way of functioning as a patron was therefore to make endowments to various ecclesiastical establishments. The purpose of such donations could be twofold: as a medium for individual expressions of piety and as a publicly visible testimony of wealth and social rank.

The *Life of St. Matrona* tells of a patrician woman, Antiochiane, who lives in Constantinople and has donated one of her many estates for the use of Matrona's small monastic community, and also pays for the repairs needed to convert it into a convent.[731] The same text refers to another wealthy woman, the previously-mentioned young Athanasia, who visits Matrona with her sister. Having found an excuse to become free of her husband to embark on a monastic life, she offers much of her property to the monastic community.[732] That Athanasia is wealthy in her own right is evident from the text. The earlier part of her story relates how she retreated to her own country estate on the pretext of having to oversee the harvest there when she wanted to hide her pursuit of a religious lifestyle from her husband. In her absence her husband gets his male servant to try and steal a bag of gold from the money box in her city house. When she eventually enters into a monastic life she settles her affairs, setting some of her slaves free and providing them with houses and money

[731] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapters 35 - 36. Cf. Garland 2013, 31-2, on female monastic institutions, often on family estates in or near Constantinople or in civilised regions near a town.
[732] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapters 42 - 46.

for expenses. Seven of her eunuchs and three "ladies of the bedchamber" follow her example and embark on a monastic life. It is thus clear that she had a considerable number of slaves and servants.[733] She hands over the care of the rest of her riches to Matrona, who is then able to build a wall around the convent, a three-storey building with a summer and a winter chapel and a burial chamber in the basement for the nuns. According to the author, this gave the monastery more or less the appearance it had at the time of writing. There was still money to be distributed, which was given to other monasteries as far away as in the Palestinian desert, Jerusalem, Emesa and Beirut.[734]

There is a story in the *Life of St. Stephen the Younger* about a widow, later named Anna, who having met the holy man wished to live a religious life on Mount Auxentos. She returns to Constantinople to sell all her belongings, distributes some of the money to the poor and needy in the capital, and is then instructed to distribute the remaining sum among the villages at the foot of the mountain with the assistance of Stephen's helper Marinos.[735]

The hagiography of St. Theodore of Sykeon also shows how female wealth was used to support monastic establishments – in this case the assets of Theodore's female relatives, his grandmother and his aunt. According to the text, the grandmother Elpidia used her resources for the benefit of the convent in which she resided during the latter part of her life.[736] The aunt Despoinia bequeathed all her worldly goods to Theodore.[737] These riches could, of course, be considered a private inheritance, to which he, as a nephew, was entitled as one of her few heirs. Nevertheless, it was this inheritance from his female relative that facilitated much of the rebuilding and enlargement (including a larger church and several chapels) of his monastery.[738]

Although one can discuss the historical authenticity of such religious narrations, the stories of St. Matrona and, more particularly, St. Theodore of Sykeon provid a detailed description of contemporary society and social practices. Both were written by authors who were familiar with the monastic establishments to which they relate, and in the case of St. Theodore of Sykeon there was presumably a personal acquaintance in later years with the protagonist of the story. One can therefore assume that these stories reflect practices of female donation and attest to the use of female wealth for the enlargement of monastic establishments at this time. From a purely literary perspective, being part of literature, these stories of female donations in themselves partake in the public side of society. Writing them down and disseminating them among an audience gave this form of female piety publicity and a place in public consciousness.

More tangible evidence related to female patronage of ecclesiastic establishments is

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[733] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 47. On eunuchs in Byzantium, see e.g. Messis 2006, 867-1030, Sidéris 2003, 221-2, Herrin 2001, 17-8, and Rinrose 2003, *passim*.

[734] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 46.

[735] *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, chapter 21.

[736] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 32.

[737] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 25. Theodore was also entitled to inherit his mother's dowry, as she died 'childless', in other words without children from her legal marriage entered into long after her son Theodore and her daughter Blatta (who died aged 15 in a convent) were born. However, Theodore disregards the information about his mother's death, which could imply that he also ignored receiving this part of his inheritance (chapter 33).

[738] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 40, 55. The text merely states that Theodore used his inheritance, but he only had female relatives from whom to inherit (his mother, his aunt and his grandmother).

connected to historically verified individuals. One major benefactor in early-6th-century Constantinople was Anicia Juliana, a woman of imperial lineage. Literary evidence of her investments in at least three church buildings has survived. One church at Honoratis is mentioned in Theophanes' *Chronographia*.[739] Six short epigrams in *Anthologia Graeca* mention contributions made by Anicia Juliana to refurbishing the church of St. Euphemia of Olybrius in Constantinople.[740] She followed, according to the texts, the tradition of her imperial mother and grandmother, who had instigated funding of the construction and upkeep of this establishment. Anicia Juliana therefore acted both within the tradition of female patronage and as part of a female lineage of high-ranking women using their wealth and position for such manifestations.[741] The largest ecclesiastical building funded by Anicia Juliana was the huge basilica of St. Polyeuktos, the ruins of which were eventually located and excavated in the 1960s, close to Saraçhane in modern Istanbul. Until the basilica was excavated the only evidence of her investment in this church building was a poem of 76 lines, preserved in *Anthologia Graeca* and honouring Anicia Juliana and her accomplishment. The excavations not only exposed the grandeur of the original church, but also revealed that the long honorary poem was, in fact, carved into the architectural decoration inside, where it could be seen by contemporary visitors.[742]

Similar evidence points to donations by other imperial ladies. Empress Theodora was involved in the building of the church of Sts. Sergius and Bacchus, next to the palace of Hormisdas, as evidenced in a dedicatory inscription found there mentioning her and proclaiming her virtues.[743] Empress Sophia invested in the church of Sts. Cosmas and Damian. An epigram in *Anthologia Graeca* shows that the ancient notion of *'do ut des*' still survived in a Christian form,[744] as in return for her donation she hopes for a successful rule for her husband:

> I, thy servant Sophia, O Christ, offer this gift to thy servants.
> Receive thine own, and to my emperor Justin
> give in payment therefor victory on victory over diseases and the barbarians.[745]

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[739] Theophanes, *Chron*. I:157-158 (AD 512/13). A book illustration of Anicia Juliana also alludes to this, *Cod.Vindob.Med.Gr.* 1 (f. 6v). Spatharakis 1976, 147, Kiilerich 2001, 171-2, Connor 2004, 111, Brubaker 2005, 439-41.

[740] *Anth. Gr.*, I:12-17. Cf. Connor 1999, 502-4, for a discussion.

[741] Cf. Brubaker 1997, 56-7.

[742] *Anth. Gr.*, I:10. Harrison 1989, *passim*. Cf. Connor 1999, 478-502, on the church and inscriptions in contemporary society. See also Whitby 2006, 159-68, 184-5, Kiilerich 2001, 181-6, Connor 2004, 106-15, McClanan 2002, 94-8, Cameron 2000b, 70 and Lauxtermann 2003, 31-2, 91-2. See James 2007, *passim*, on the role of such public inscriptions, noting that they might not have been meant to be read by everyone, rather having symbolic roles.

[743] See Foss 2002, 148, who refers to A. Van Millinger, *Byzantine Churches in Constantinople*, London 1912, 73-4. See McClanan 2002, 98-106, on Theodora's patronage activities. The church of Sts. Sergius and Bacchus (now Kucuk Aya Sofia) has recently been carefully renovated (information from I. Nilsson).

[744] On gifts, prayers and reciprocity in early Byzantine religious life, see Brubaker 2010, 33-37, 39-43.

[745] *Anth. Gr.*, I:11 (translated by W.R. Patton, 1948-60). The heading connects the poem to the church of Sts. Cosmas and Damian. The poem may also mirror the *topos* of a pious wife who asks for nothing for herself, but everything for her husband. Cf. the *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 90, in which Theodora, the wife of the *silentiarios* Mannas, receiving the knowledge that destiny had determined that her husband would die before her, asks the Saint to pray to God for her to die quickly and therefore before her husband.

It appears from the source material that Empress Irene also built or refurbished churches, including Hagia Sophia in Thessaloniki, and the churches of St. Euphemia and St. Eustathios in the capital, as well as the Church of the Virgin of the Source, which also received lavish gifts.[746] When her husband died Irene donated his crown, refurbished with pearls, to Hagia Sophia in Constantinople.[747]

Another type of donation, which was well attested in later periods but possibly dated back earlier, is the creation of monastic foundations. Empress Irene is said to have built a monastery on the largest of the Prince's islands in the Sea of Marmara.[748] Several *typika*, or rules for convents, dating from the 9th century onwards have survived. It seems that women, many with imperial connections, donated large portions of their wealth for the creation of monastic establishments. Alongside their pious motives, one aim was to create a place of retreat and retirement for the donors and the women in their families.[749]

Only women with great wealth could build churches or create new monasteries, and they tended to belong to the highest level of society. This did not prevent other women from making donations and dedications on a more moderate scale. Different types of art work were endowed, including icons and wall mosaics, but this still demanded wealth. The church of St. Demetrios in Thessaloniki originally housed some 5th-to-7th-century mosaics, which currently are preserved only in early-20th-century aquarelles. Among several mosaics depicting children being presented before the saint is one elaborate narrative sequence with strong female connotations. Four different scenes depict a girl, named Maria in an attached inscription, being presented at different stages of her infancy, childhood and adolescence to St. Demetrios and the Virgin Mary by her mother and other members of her family, most of whom are female.[750] Although it is not certain that the mosaic was commissioned by a woman, the strong emphasis on the female members of Maria's family and the lack of any clear father figure in the scenes makes it a plausible hypothesis.

There is a 7th-century icon of St. Peter, now at the Monastery of St. Catherine in Sinai, which Leslie Brubaker argues was made in gratitude for heeding a mother's plea to heal her son. Above the portrait of the saint are three small medallions depicting Christ (in the middle) between portraits of a young boy and a woman, which in the view of Kurt Weitzmann represented the Virgin Mary and a young John the Evangelist. Brubaker, however, suggests that they could be the donors, a mother and her son.[751] Brubaker and Haldon refer to evidence of such *ex voto* imagery in the early

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[746] E.g. *Patria,* III.9, 85, 142, 154. Garland 1999, 93, Herrin 2001, 82, 261, Brubaker & Haldon 2011, 145, 310, Lilie 1996, 144-5.

[747] Theophanes, *Chron*. 6273 [AD 780/1] (454). Brubaker & Haldon 2011, 310.

[748] Theophanes, *Chron*. 6295 [AD 802/3] (478, 480). Brubaker & Haldon 2011, 297.

[749] On this subject see e.g. Talbot 1990, 128-9, Talbot 1997, 135-6, Talbot & Galatariotou 1988, *passim*, Galatariotou 1987, *passim*. Cf. Connor 2004, 161, 168-70, 268-307.

[750] Cormack 1969, 31-7, Pls. 3-5, 7-9; Cormack 1985, 88-9, Figs. 27-29; Hennessy 2003, 157-62, Figs. 11.1-4. Cf. Maguire 2007, 153, and Brubaker 2010, 40-2. According to Brubaker 2004b, 64, 72-5, 86, and Grabar 1978, 71, it represents different children and families, which only emphasises a strong female connotation among patrons of the elite in Thessaloniki.

[751] Weitzmann 1976, 24, & Pl. VII (icon B.5), who does note that the woman's garment is not the usual purple colour

8th century. A series of scenes from the life of St. Menas in the town of Jême in Coptic Egypt ends with two figures with their hands raised in prayer, identified by an inscription as "Elisabeth and her daughter".[752]

Sources indicate that women without such abundant financial means also made donations, often in the form of smaller objects for use in a specific church. A fragmentary epigram of uncertain date, but surviving in the same context as those mentioned above, implies a more modest donation:

> I am the good circle of good Agathonike…
> and she dedicated me to the immaculate Martyr Trophimus.[753]

It is uncertain what the round object was, but it could have been anything from Agathonike's wedding ring when widowed to a plate or a chalice for the Eucharist. The object may also have contained the original dedication, as in the case of St. Polyeuktos and the long poem celebrating Anicia Juliana's donation. Women donated items such as church furniture, Eucharistic vessels and icons. The Kaper Koraon Treasure from northern Syria comprising silver objects from between 540 and 640 and now in various museum collections, contained a chalice with the inscription "Having vowed, Sara offered this chalice to the First Martyr" around the rim.[754] A 6th-century bracelet with a medallion has three short inscriptions: "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord", "Health" and "Theotoke, help Anna. Grace".[755]

As Connor points out, whereas women with some wealth made donations by themselves, poorer women might donate as a group.[756] The donation did not have to be in the form of an object, and could be for a certain institution or a specific purpose. A papyrus from Nessana dated to the early 7th century lists the offerings presented to the church of St. Sergius for general or specific purposes. Among the sixty contributors are "three women", "woman from Sobata" "a woman from Betomolacha", "the wife of Zerizas", "the mother-in-law of Father Elias", "Cyriacus from Bedorotha..., his sister, Taim al-Gā", "the wife of Georg, son of Dārib, inhabitant of Elusa" and "Georg and Nona for the women's quarters".[757] Talbot claims that donations often were made by women who were widowed, as they by then generally were in full charge of their property and financial resources.[758] That might be true, but such a presumption is speculative given the evidence shows that donations were made by women in a variety of civic positions. One occasion when many

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used for the Virgin Mary. Brubaker 2010, 40-1, Fig. 3.5. Brubaker & Haldon 2011, 36.

752 Brubaker & Haldon 2011, 69,

753 *Anth. Gr.*, I:18 (translated by W.R. Patton, 1948-60).

754 Mango 1986, 165-70, 246, cat. no. 73, cf. also nos. 79, 81, 83. The Riha Paten from the same treasure, made ca. 565-78, has an image of the Communion of the Apostles and an inscription around its rim: "For the peace of the soul of Sergia, [daughter] of John, and of Theodosius, and for the salvation of Megalos and Nonnus and their children". Cameron 2006a, 130 fig. 18. See also, Krueger 2005, 309, and Alchermes 2005, 351, and plate x.

755 Mango 1986, 266-67. Vikan 1984, 77-8, 83-5, argues that jewellery with similar inscriptions were also used as amulets to bring good health and fertility.

756 Connor 2004, 98-100.

757 Kraemer 1958, 227-33, no. 79.

758 Talbot 1997, 128-9.

women donated a substantial proportion of their belongings or property was upon entering a convent, possibly in the way exemplified in the story of Athanasia where some went to the monastic institution and some to the poor, although most surviving monastic rules declare that no financial contribution is required to enter a convent.[759]

Charity work was another way in which women used their wealth for pious purposes. As Talbot notes, "religious life and philanthropy were inextricably entwined in Byzantium, especially since the church increasingly took over from the state responsibility for care of the needy. Most of the institutions that provided welfare services were directly or indirectly run by the church."[760] Herrin, in turn, points out the importance of charitable donations to the church as a form of piety in Byzantium, furthering the spiritual advancement of the donor.[761]

Talbot's assessment of '*philantropia*', such as establishing charitable institutions, as one of the few ways an empress could make some impact on the lives of her subjects, is, in my opinion, somewhat too narrow an interpretation of an empress's influence on society.[762] Admittedly, philanthropic work constituted an important part of her role and Talbot is probably right in suggesting that in the case of empresses and other women of means, help for the needy was usually indirect, through the provision of funds.[763] However, there were other forms of charitable activities available to ordinary women. Charity work did not require money and was thus an option for women with fewer means at their disposal. It could involve helping in attending to the sick and poor, which was one of the tasks of deaconesses,[764] or showing charity to a specific individual in distress.[765] Matrona is mentioned as administering to and caring for the poor and needy when she was still a young woman and wife in Constantinople, but already aiming at a religious vocation.[766] Charity work could also be done with the wealth of others. John of Ephesus tells the story of Euphemia, a widow who devotes herself to a religious life and charity work. Noblemen and women who see her efforts donate supplies to be distributed by her to the needy of the city, and she even persuades unwilling givers.[767]

Examples from religious literature give some insight into the character of charitable work done by women in public space. Almsgiving was common. *Pratum Spirituale* contains a story about

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[759] Talbot 1997, 137-8, Talbot 1994, 109-10.

[760] Talbot 1994, 122.

[761] Herrin 1984, 178. Cf. also Talbot 1994, 106-7, 109. Talbot mainly discusses the activities of women of the imperial family, the aristocracy and the middle class, who she assumed had the financial means.

[762] Talbot 1994, 106-7. I discuss other activities of empresses in Chapter V.A.

[763] Talbot 1994, 111.

[764] LePorte 1982, 113-6.

[765] Cf. Talbot 1994, 105-6, and Talbot 1997, 134: that women "volunteered in hospitals, helping to feed and bathe patients; some visited prisons, consoling those in confinement; others roamed the streets, seeking out beggars and homeless people in order to give them clothing, food, and money." On what evidence this is based is unclear. Interestingly, the notion of 'roaming the streets to seek out beggars and homeless people' stands somewhat in contrast to the discussed ideals for women to restrict their activities outside the domestic sphere, although admittedly the pious nature of such activities could sanction them.

[766] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 2.

[767] John of Ephesus, *Lives*, chapter 12 (6th century) (translation by S.P. Brock & S. Ashbrook Harvey, 1987, 127, 129-30). Euphemia lived in Amida.

an old Phrygian woman from Galatia who regularly distributed two coins to everyone in the church of Sts. Cosmas and Damian in Jerusalem, regardless of their social status.[768] Even if more consequential donations were possible only for women of some wealth, small sums could always be donated as alms by women with relatively meagre means at their disposal. Another story contains more fictional elements with a strong Christian educational aspect. A Christian woman in Nisibis persuades her pagan husband to give their spare money as 'a loan' to the Christian God, by giving it to the poor in church. This charitable act is rewarded through the miraculous finding of precious stones in the stomach of a fish (an old *topos* and storyline) when the family is in need of money.[769] Here the woman is the instigator of the charity, but the husband is the one doing the distribution in public. One can sense a delicate balance between social demands on female behaviour and the possibility for women publicly to distribute alms. The first of these two stories is about a widow distributing her own money, whereas in the second it is the money of the family that is being distributed and therefore it is done by the husband, who is officially responsible for the family finances and has juridical right to dispose of them. This could simply be the reason for the difference in the roles of the two women. On the other hand, the first woman is old and a widow, for whom the social codes for movability were somewhat different than for the second woman, who was still a wife.

There were other tangible forms of female charitable acts, as in a story from the Iconoclastic period in the *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*. The iconophile wife of the prison guard provides food for Stephen while he is in the Praetorion prison in Constantinople. She also provides him with an icon for worship, which she had kept hidden.[770] Although the charitable act was carried out in secret, the woman had to venture into a public space to do it.

A more elaborate description of female charity is to be found in the mentioned story of Euphemia, as told by John of Ephesus. She is a widow living in the city of Amida. She and her daughter weave goats' wool yarn for the noblewomen in the city to support themselves, but Euphemia spends her time and surplus resources, as well as what she can get from the wealthy, to help those in need. Much of her work involves giving comfort and nourishment. She is described as daily taking cooked food, bread and wine to those in need, such as prisoners or bereft people she found in the city squares; alternatively, she walks around courtyards seeking poor orphans or old widows who are ill, sitting down and talking to them and giving out apples, pomegranates and fish. Both the sick and the poor are mentioned: the ill, the crippled, the blind and old people unable to walk. She would also help strangers arriving in the city and monks displaced during religious controversies, even venturing outside the city searching inns, roads and monasteries for anyone in

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[768] Moschos, *Prat.Spir.* chapter 127. The woman specifically distributes the coins in the church herself.

[769] Moschos, *Prat.Spir.* chapter 185. Herodotus' classical story of treasure in the stomach of a fish tells of Polycrates, the tyrant of Samos. Having been persuaded to throw some of his treasured possessions into the sea, he retrieves a ring from the stomach of a fish he is served at dinner. Herodotus, *Hist*. 3. 40 -2 (further parallels, such as the story of King Salomon's ring, are collected in W. A. Clouston, *Popular Tales and Fictions: Their Migrations and Transformations*, republished by Kessinger Publ., 2003, i, 398).

[770] *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, 57 [p. 256-7] (Migne, *PG* 100, col. 1164A). Kazhdan & Talbot 1991/1992, 395, Herrin 1983, 71.

need or strangers lying ill. Some she brought home, some she took to hospitals.[771]

Women were also at the receiving end of charity. The *Life of John the Almsgiver* tells of alms distribution at which women were also present. At one point the bishop ordered double the amount given to men to be distributed to women and children on account of their being weaker members of society. It also mentions philanthropic institutions specifically designed for women. The patriarch John set up lie-in maternity wards for poor woman in different parts of Alexandria in the early 7th century, seven in all, each with 40 beds. After their labour the women were to rest quietly for seven days and were then given a third of a *nomisma* on departure.[772] There was probably a need for female staff in these institutions to tend to the women so as to maintain the required level of decorum, including midwives and other female medical personnel. Midwives are discussed later in connection with female occupations outside the home.[773] Although the Church had charitable institutions that cared for orphans, the poor, the sick and the old, monasteries catered for some of the needs of individuals. An early-7th-century papyrus from Nessana contains a list of offerings to the church of St. Sergius. Some of the contributors specifically earmarked their donation "for the women's quarters" (εἰς τὰ ματρωνίκια), possibly a hospice at the monastery for female worshippers or pilgrims.[774] Female inhabitants of a convent could also care for women in need of help.[775]

Charity certainly took some women into public space, as providers and receivers, whereas donating to religious establishments made women visible on a more symbolic level. Both were aspects of female piety and of women's participation in the religious side of society.

D. Ecclesiastic and religious personae

Scholars tend to point out the limited opportunities open to women for religious self-expression inside the ecclesiastic establishment. Many of these comments are made in connection with their seemingly strong attachment to icons, which is considered an outlet for often otherwise circumscribed possibilities for female devotion.[776] In light of the above discussion, this may be a somewhat simplified interpretation, given that women were engaging in publicly staged devotion and religious celebrations, both as spectators and as active participants. It has also been pointed out that there was no major role for women within the ecclesiastic hierarchy, and even that of deaconess was constantly diminishing. This may be true in part, but women still had the opportunity to devote

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[771] John of Ephesus, *Lives*, chapter 12 (6th century) (translated by S.P. Brock & S. Ashbrook Harvey, 1987, 126-30).

[772] *Life of St. John the Almsgiver*, chapters A7 & 7 (the part assigned by Dawes & Baynes, 1948, 195-6, as by John Moschos & Sophronius, patriarch of Jerusalem). Men were given one *keration*, whereas women and children were to have two *keratia*. The patriarch set up the hospitals when he heard that women still weak from childbirth had to hurry to the alms-distribution during a famine. Cf. Talbot 1994, 116, and Talbot 1997, 125.

[773] See Chapter IV.A, 150-51.

[774] Kraemer 1958, 227-33, no. 79.

[775] Cf. *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 95 (related to the end of the 6th century): an eight-year-old dumb girl is brought to Theodore by her female teacher, see 119. She may have been a ward at the convent due to her handicap.

[776] See e.g. Kazhdan & Talbot 1991/1992, 391, Talbot 2001, 4-5, Herrin 1983, 71-2, Herrin 1984, 180, Herrin 1992, 100, and Saradi-Mendelovici 1991, 92-3.

themselves to a religious life and, as has been observed above, such women had prestige in society and did not necessarily lack influence.[777]

As mentioned above, the only ecclesiastic office open to women was that of **deaconess**. Even if the role of the order was diminishing, as some scholars argue,[778] it still existed and the major churches, at least, ordained deaconesses.[779] One of their major functions was to assist female proselytes being tutored in preparation for adopting the Christian faith and especially during the baptismal ceremony. They were probably also involved in church charity, especially when female individuals were concerned.[780] As noted in the *Life of St. Matrona*, those summoned to the baptismal of female proselytes included not only a priest and a deacon but also a deaconess.[781] It is mentioned in the episode from *Pratum Spirituale* dealing with the baptismal of a young Persian woman that the bishop was contemplating the more active involvement of a deaconess, who therefore must have existed in connection with his bishopry, but the possibility of her anointing the female proselyte is discarded as not allowable.[782] These stories confirm the position of deaconesses as purely assistive, with no liturgical aspects. In this connection it is worth mentioning an incident involving Matrona. By accident, being hemmed in by the crowd, she finds herself at the side of the bishop and other members of the clergy ministering holy oil flowing from a relic to the assembled people wishing for its blessing. Although the story is clearly told to underline Matrona's blessed person, lifting her above ordinary individuals and even other ecclesiastic women, what is interesting is that it involves a woman helping to minister holy oil.[783] Furthermore, Moschos' story of the archbishop contemplating giving a deaconess the task of anointing a female proselyte, albeit he decided against it, supports the idea that female exclusion from ministry was not fully explicit.[784]

Stories like these verify the continuing existence of deaconesses in the church hierarchy in the 6th century.[785] To this can be added two epitaphs from the 4th to the 6th centuries in the vicinity of Athens, namely for deaconesses Euphrosyne and Niacagore.[786] According to Saradi-Mendelovici,

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[777] *Trullo*, 40, 45-6, 48, mentions religious careers available to women: church virgin and widow, deaconess, and a monastic life. Cf. LePorte 1982, 58-65, 70-1, 111-9, 130, and Thurstone 1989, 23-5, 32-5, 46-8.

[778] E.g. Herrin 1983, 72, Connor 2004, 75, 163, 170, Saradi-Mendelovici 1991, 92-3, specifically note 46. Cf. Casey 2013, 179.

[779] See LePorte 1982, 111-32, on the development of the office of deaconess, and Karras 2004, *passim*, on the female deaconate in the Byzantine Church. Cf. also Thurston 1989, 73-4, 97 and note 24, 105, 114, 116. Herrin 1983, 72, claims that the order was in decline from the 6th century onwards, although Karras 2004, 310, suggests that it began in the 7th and 8th centuries, while Talbot 1997, 134, and *ibid.* 1994, 114-5, notes that it survived in some form at least until the 12th century. See also, Saradi-Mendelovici 1991, 92-3, and Herrin 1992, *passim*, on the *Council of Trullo* (691/2), in which 25 of the 102 canons relate to women, either as lay persons or in an ecclesiastic position (*Trullo*, 3-5, 13-4, 30, 40, 42, 45-8, 53-4, 62, 70, 72, 77, 8-7, 91-3, 97-8).

[780] For a survey of the position of deaconesses see e.g. Karidoyanes FitzGerald, 1983, *passim*, and Cardman 1999, 314-9, and on their place in the church space, Taft 1998, 63-70.

[781] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapters 22 - 23. See Chapter III.A, 112.

[782] Moschos, *Prat.Spir*. ch. 3. See Chapter III.A, 111.

[783] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 12. See Chapter III.A, 106, III.B, 124.

[784] Moschos, *Prat.Spir*. chapter 3. Cf. Karras, 2004, 278, on entrusting deaconesses with bringing the Eucharist to the homes of housebound female parishioners.

[785] Cf. Topping 1988, 212.

[786] Sironen 1997, 235-7, no. 194 (5th/6th centuries) and no. 196 (4th/6th centuries).

there were twenty deaconesses connected to the Hagia Sophia church in Constantinople in the 6th century, although she claims that their number diminished later on.[787] Any claims of a swift decline are contradicted in two imperial *Novellae*, however, one by Justinian from 535 and the other by Heraklios from 612, which fix the number of deaconesses serving in Hagia Sophia at 40: Heraklios also stipulates a further six deaconesses serving with the clergy at the church of Blachernai.[788] A compilation of Middle Byzantine law still mentions a stipulation of 40 deaconesses for Constantinople.[789] Canons 14 and 40 of the *Council of Trullo* in 691/2 set out age rules for deaconesses, indicating that this order still had significance and had to be considered by the assembly of the church council.[790] A source relating to the Iconoclastic period of the 9th century reports the ordination of the future saint Irene as deaconess of the Great Church in Constantinople.[791] Talbot notes that the order of deaconesses continued to exist at least until the 12th century, whereas Karras claims that the slow dwindling of the order started in the 7th and 8th centuries, especially after the Iconoclast controversy.[792] Despite their diminishing role in baptisms, deaconesses continued to have other functions such as involvement in charitable work.[793] Further, when Matrona died at an old age it was a deaconess called Mosilla who reportedly succeeded her and took charge of her monastic flock.[794]

Deaconesses could also function as **spiritual teachers** and guides for the female side of the congregation. The story of the young female proselytes from Beirut related above, in which a priest, deacon and deaconess were called for, refers not only to the baptism of the young women, but also to their religious instruction into the Christian faith.[795] Deaconesses, it seems, could be involved in such activities when they concerned women. Further on in the story, when Matrona leaves Beirut for Constantinople, the bishop sends two deaconesses to take charge of her young disciples and the newly baptised novices who are left behind.[796] On this occasion Matrona addresses the deaconesses as "spiritual mothers and sisters", asking them to be mothers to the young women "in body and spirit, and take care for their salvation for as long as you shall have them". The women remain in the care of these deaconesses until they are dispatched by ship to join Matrona in Constantinople.[797] The deaconesses functioned, it seems, as spiritual guides, guardians and protectors of the young women who had joined the religious order that Matrona represented. When St. Theodore visits Constantinople a young monastic girl connected to the Cathedral is brought before him by her female

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[787] Saradi-Mendelovici 1991, 92-3 and note 46.

[788] *Nov*. 3 chapter 1 (AD 535), and *Nov. Heraclii* I (AD 612), Konidaris 1982, 54, 64-5, 68-71, 96-8.

[789] *Ecloga Bas*. 3.2.1. On the date of the text, see Burgman 1988, viii.

[790] *Trullo*, 14 & 40, puts the minimum age for a deaconess at 40. Justinian's *Nov*. 6 chapter 6 sets the age limit for ordaining a deaconess at 50, but *Nov.* 123 chapter 13 lowers it to 40. On legislation concerning the order of deaconesses, see also Chapter II.D, 81-2, 84, II.E, 94.

[791] *Life of Irene of Chrysobalanton*, 7.29. Connor 2004, 175. Cf. Karras 2004, 280, 310.

[792] Talbot 1997, 134. Karras 2004, 310.

[793] Cf. Talbot 1994, 114-5, Talbot 1997, 133-4, and LaPorte 1982, 112-6.

[794] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 52.

[795] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 23. See Chapter III.A, 112.

[796] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 27.

[797] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 31.

teacher. The woman's position is not clear, but given that she is linked to a church and a convent, she might be a deaconess or a nun.[798]

Matrona is referred to several times as a spiritual teacher or spiritual mother. The nuns in the convent in Emesa in which she resided came to look upon her as a guide, leader and spiritual mother. She is described as initiating her first disciples in Beirut into the Christian way of life, and also teaching them to read and going through texts of the Scripture with them.[799] Upon Matrona's departure some 'freewomen' in Beirut express their regret and ask who "will speak to us of love for a husband, of love of children and godly housekeeping? Who will instruct us in good deeds and every good work in service of God?".[800] Sophrone, her first disciple, follows her to Constantinople in a typical teacher - disciple relationship that is familiar from texts on male monastics.[801] Earlier in the story, when Matrona as the 25-year-old wife of a nobleman is striving towards a religious way of life in Constantinople, a woman called Eugenia is mentioned as her teacher in this spiritual and religious pursuit.[802] The text is not clear about Eugenia's position, but she is mentioned as one "who not only in name but also in deed showed nobility of soul, chastity of body, and manliness of heart. For she was one of those women who devoted themselves to all-night psalmody, displaying the traits of martyrs for the martyrs' sake."[803] She also had some connection to the monastery of Bassianos, where she eventually took Matrona, who wanted to escape her husband and pursue a monastic life.[804] When, much later, Matrona moved to her newly established convent in Constantinople Eugenia moved to be with her.[805] The female saint is described in the *Life of St. Anthousa* not only as the superior of a large double monastery, but also as the spiritual mother and instructor of the men who went there.[806] Susan is similarly described in the *Lives of the Eastern Saints* as a spiritual teacher visited also by men.[807]

The above-mentioned Eugenia is associated with a woman named Susannah.[808] She is described as being enrolled in the order of widows and living in the porticoes adjoining a church.[809] Amma Damiana, mentioned in *Pratum Spirituale*, who was the mother of the bishop Athenogenes of Petra and was living "in silence" in Jerusalem, could also have belonged to a similar group of

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[798] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 95. The eight-year-old girl belonged to a convent connected to the Cathedral and had suffered from dumbness during the past three years. See also Chapter III.B, 120.

[799] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapters 11,19, & 23. The texts of David are mentioned in particular. Cf. Topping 1988, 217-9, Constantinou 2008, *passim*, and Brown 2013, 62.

[800] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 26.

[801] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 28.

[802] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 2 - 3, 5. Cf. Topping 1988, 215-7.

[803] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 2. Cyril Mango in his notes to J. Featherstone's translation in Talbot 1996 suggests that Eugenia belonged to a voluntary confraternity centred on a shrine (p. 20 note 30).

[804] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapters 4 & 10.

[805] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 36.

[806] *Life of St. Anthousa of Mantineon*, 17 (*SynaxCP* 849-50) (related to the second half of the 8th century). Talbot (ed.) 1998, 13.

[807] John of Ephesus, *Lives,* chapter 27. (6th century) (Brock & Harvey, 1987, 139-41). See also, Chapter III.B, 125.

[808] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 8. According to the text, "there was with this Eugenia a certain Susannah", their exact relationship remaining unclear except for being acquainted and attending night vigils.

[809] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 3. Eugenia, of course, could also have belonged to that order.

women, as she was living in her own house, but is still depicted as a woman devoted to a religious lifestyle.[810] Groups called **church virgins** and **church widows** existed in the Early Church, the division between them being somewhat indistinct. Susannah is mentioned as having been enrolled in the order of widows from an early age.[811] As early as the 1st century Ignatius of Antioch (*Smyrnaeans* 13.1) speaks of "virgins who are called widows", seemingly referring to unmarried women doing similar work as the widows.[812] The council in *Trullo* stipulates 17 as the minimum age for taking up the vocation of a virgin, and 60 for that of a widow.[813] Both groups comprised women who had dedicated their life to religious devotion without necessarily leaving their family sphere. They had some sort of official status and protection from the Church, and were assigned the task of praying for the congregation.[814] The above-mentioned religious virgin who lived in Alexandria and was pursued by her male neighbour probably belonged to this category.[815] Further, the differentiation between church virgins and widows on the one hand, and the order of deaconesses and ordained nuns on the other, is not always clear in the sources, leading to some debate among scholars on what they were in practice.[816] Garland, among others, sees church virgins and widows as early versions of female urban monastics.[817] However, according to the sources, at least in the 6th and 7th centuries there still were groups of women who were not considered regular nuns in terms of having taken the monastic habit and living in a convent, but were recognised as women living a religious life in a domestic sphere but in close connection with a church. Apart from actively being in attendance during liturgy, they may have had duties in the congregation, such as charity work. There is no indication of how active a part women such as Susannah and Eugenia in Constantinople and Amma Damiana in Jerusalem played in night vigils and psalmodies, but they may have functioned as choristers in religious ceremonies.[818] The above-mentioned reference to the choir of virgins in Justinian's funeral procession, whether they were nuns or church virgins, seems to indicate

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[810] Moschos, *Prat. Spir*., chapter 127. Amma Damiana tells how she spent the whole night in church on Friday, before enclosing herself in her house.

[811] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 3.

[812] Thurston 1989, 54-5, 62-6.

[813] *Trullo*, 40 (691/2). See Cardman 1999, 304-19, Thurson 1989, *passim*, and LePorte 1982, 58-105, for church virgins and widows in the first five centuries.

[814] See e.g. LePorte 1982, 71-2, Thurston 1989, 72-3, 99, and Talbot 1997, 128-9.

[815] Moschos, *Prat.Spir.* chapter 60. See also, Chapter III.A, 105.

[816] See e.g. Talbot 1994, 114. On the other hand, Cardman 1999, 316, considers the distinction between church widows and deaconesses to be relatively clear, at least in normative texts. This does not exclude the possibility that the groups were less distinct in the religious literature. Cf. LePorte 1982, *passim*, and Thurstone 1989, *passim*, with a discussion on the chronological shifts within and between the different categories.

[817] Garland 2013, 34.

[818] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapters 2, 8 & 31: Eugenia, Susannah, and Matrona devote themselves to attending night vigils and all-night psalmody, and Matrona performs in her loggings the customary psalmody according to the rule that was passed down to her. Moschos, *Prat. Spir*., chapter 127, in which Amma Damiana tells that she spent the night in the church. Cf. *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, chapter 5, in which a wife and mother of three children goes to night vigils with her young son Stephen, and Theod. Stoud, *Laudatio,* § 4, praising his mother for never missing midnight office. On men attending night services, see e.g. Procopius, *Bell.* 1.24.10 (the *questor* John the Cappadocian), and Theophanes, *Chron*. 6095 [AD 602/3] (a calligrapher in Alexandria).

that such groups occasionally had a more active role.[819]

The vocation of a **nun** was not to be entered into lightly. Matrona expressed doubts concerning Athanasia, who wanted to take up this religious vocation. When she first voiced this wish she was only 18 years old, a wealthy and married noblewoman. Both Matrona and the deacon Markellos, her advisers, were initially reluctant to allow a young and wealthy woman, used to having servants and an easy way of life, to take the monastic habit. It was only the consistent pursuit of ascetic living in her private life and some shorter visits to the convent, and the statements given by her eunuchs as 'character witnesses' of her virtuous, pious and ascetic lifestyle that convinced Matrona and Markellos of her capability of living a monastic life. Eventually convincing her husband to set her free, she permanently entered the convent.[820] The message here is that a monastic life is good, but it is also an ordeal and should not be entered into if one has attachments, is too young or too accustomed to a comfortable life, or has too feeble a nature. This stands in contrast to the young girls in Beirut who became proselytes by abandoning their families and taking refuge with Matrona. Nothing more was asked of them than their conviction to become Christians and pursue a religious lifestyle.[821] There were differences in circumstances between Athanasia and the girls from Beirut, however. Athanasia wanted to begin her life as a nun in an established convent and to remover herself from her life and attachment to her husband, and her high social position in a Christian society. The girls from Beirut, although from good families, were not necessarily of noble birth. Their only attachments were as daughters: there were no husbands or family duties to consider. They also were pagans wanting to become Christians. At this point Matrona had not yet established any monastic community: the girls simply wished to follow her as disciples in pursuit of a pious lifestyle.

The monastic habit was not always taken up totally voluntarily, or there may have been a change of heart. This is apparent in a story in *Pratum Spirituale*. Five of the 40 nuns in a Lycian convent decide that they want to leave and get married, and try to sneak out of the convent in secret during the night. Given that the text represents edifying and religious literature, the five women became possessed during this attempted escape and so returned to the convent and no longer wanted to leave after their experience.[822]

For some women added reasons on top of religious zeal motivated the choice to lead a monastic life: it meant sheltered retirement after a long life as a lay person or having been left without family, or wishing to leave behind a promiscuous way of life, or because of illness. Theodore of Sykeon's grandmother, aunt and sister decided to enter convents when Theodore took up a monastic lifestyle, while his mother chose marriage. Young women, some of whom were ill or possessed, were put under the care of Theodore's grandmother Elpidia in the convent of St.

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819 Corippus, *In laudem* III:36f. See Chapter III.A, 116. Cf. LePorte 1982, 106-7.

820 *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 39 - 43.

821 *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 19 - 23.

822 Moschos, *Prat.Spir.*, chapter 135. Cf. Procopius, *Anecd*. 17, who claims that some of the former prostitutes in a convent called Repentance, which Empress Theodora had provided for them on the Asian shore opposite Constantinople, threw themselves from the parapet during the night rather than being forcefully held there.

Christopher.[823] A possessed woman cured by Theodore withdrew to lead a solitary life in a cell near a church of the Virgin when her husband and children died.[824] One chapter of *Pratum Spirituale* is about a promiscuous woman who wants to change her life and so is led to a convent, and another one tells of two female companions of the actor Babylas in Tassos who, after a religious conversion, withdrew to a cell they created for themselves connected to the city walls.[825]

Theoretically there were rules about not entering monastic life at too young an age, but there is a story in the *Life of St. Theodore* about a girl who was a monastic in a convent in Constantinople at the age of eight. She had been dumb for three years, which might explain why she was in a convent.[826] Theodore's sister Blatta is said to have entered the Petris convent in Ancyra at the age of twelve.[827] The Council in *Trullo* stipulated the age of 17 as the lower limit in terms of making a definitive decision to embark on a monastic life, whereas a law by Leo VI considers previous rules setting the lower limit at the ages of 16, 17 and 10.[828]

Many prominent families were connected to monasteries. Some leading citizens in Ancyra, for example, had daughters living as nuns in a nearby convent, and asked Theodore to visit them when he was called to the metropolis.[829] Several of the women who became nuns, such as Athanasia and Matrona, were from the higher strata of society,[830] and many of the nuns and devoted women mentioned in the religious texts were related to clergymen of varying rank. Three of Theodore's female relatives became nuns, and Matrona was at first sent to a convent in Emesa to which the deacon Markellos had previously sent his sister.[831] Bishop Adelphios' sister was an *hegumenissa,* and Amma Damiana was the mother of the bishop Athenogenes of Petra.[832]

Inherent in the vocation of a nun is the concept of enclosure and withdrawal from public society. This did not prevent monastics from occasionally playing a public role or having some public visibility, however.[833] A story, similar to that of the virgin in Alexandria, tells of a nun in Jerusalem who, upon realising that a young man has fallen in love with her, decides to release him from any temptation and possible doom by withdrawing herself to lead a reclusive life in the desert.[834] Even if some stories are fictional, created for the edification of the audience, they show that not even nuns were always separated from the public. Compared to male monasteries, later

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[823] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapters 25 & 32.
[824] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 71.
[825] *Prat.Spir.* chapters 31& 32.
[826] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 95.
[827] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 25.
[828] *Trullo*, 40 (AD 690/2). Leo VI, *Nov.* 6.
[829] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapters 45-6.
[830] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapters 2, 38 - 45
[831] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 25. *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 11.
[832] Moschos, *Prat.Spir.* chapter127 - 128.
[833] As Talbot, with regard to later periods, notes: "nuns for the most part strictly observed rules of monastic enclosure and rarely left the cloister", but in the next paragraphs she mentions exceptions and occasions that could cause a nun to venture outside. Talbot 1997, 139-40.
[834] Moschos, *Prat.Spir.* chapter 179.

Byzantine convents in particular were more likely to be in urban settings.[835] Hypathia / Febronia in early-9th-century Constantinople, for example, lives in a wealthy family but yearns for an ascetic life. Eventually she, her mother, sister and some of their maidservants take the monastic habit and their family house is turned into a convent.[836] Matrona's story presents a similar setting in the early 6th century: the estate she receives for her convent is situated inside the city walls of Constantinople and in the vicinity of several other monasteries. Both aspects are seen as good features by the deacon Markellos, who evaluated the suitability of the property for the purpose.[837] Interaction between the inhabitants of convents and the surrounding community was likely not avoidable in everyday life and in the running of the establishment, and was probably not even attempted. The story of Matrona again provides an example with the visits of Athanasia and her sisters. Their first encounter with Matrona was on their return from a religious feast when they passed by the street on which her convent was situated and heard psalm singing coming from the buildings. After making inquiries among the neighbours they were told the story of Matrona and decided to visit her in the convent.[838] The surrounding community is described as being aware of the circumstances of the spiritual leader and visitors are also received into the convent.

Although many convents were in urban locations, some early nunneries were established in connection with male monasteries on holy mountains, as Talbot notes. The convent of Trichinaera on Mount Saint Auxentos, originating in the 5th century, actually pre-dated the hermitage situated there. According to a story related to the 8th century, the nuns were permitted to visit the hermitage twice a week and there was some social interaction between the nuns in the convent and the monks at the site. Hence, the nun Anna could be falsely accused of having illicit relations with the holy man Stephen.[839] **Female ascetics** took a step further into solitude**.** A nun could, of course, be considered an ascetic, but there is a difference between nuns living communally in convents (*coinobium* life) and female ascetics living a solitary life in isolation as **hermits**. Although there were convents also in the countryside most were in the vicinity of villages or towns, whereas hermits were associated with remote areas and solitary living. Even so, there may have been some interaction between male and female ascetics, the potential dangers of which are brought to light in a story in *Pratum Spirituale*. A woman is living as an ascetic in a cave near the cell of a male ascetic in the Palestinian desert. One hot day, while wandering around in the area, she feels thirsty and knocks on the cell opening of the male hermit to ask for some water. She then returns to her cave, but the man is tempted by his female visitor and sets out to pursue her. On his way he is rescued by a vision that changes his mind.[840] The story indicates that even hermits were dependent on some contact with the surrounding society.

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[835] Talbot 1985, 2, 4-5, Talbot 1997, 138-9. She has studied *typika* of Byzantine monastic institutions and notes that the those for female cloisters make up only 10 %, Talbot 1994, 105. Female convents also tended to be smaller and less well-endowed than their male counterparts, Talbot 1997, 138-9.

[836] *Life of Sts. David, Symeon, and George of Lesbos*, 196.

[837] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 36. The donator was the patrician Antiochiane, see above, 62, 124-5.

[838] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 38.

[839] *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, chapters 13-4, 21, 32-6. Auzépy 1997, 9-19. Talbot 1985, 3.

[840] Moschos, *Prat.Spir.* chapter 19.

As for Matrona, not only did she have the role of a blessed holy person, she also served later in life as the **mother superior** of her convent.[841] *Pratum Spirituale* confirms that the *hegumenissa* (mother superior) was responsible for the well-being of the nuns. One story tells of the bishop Adelphios of Arabesso visiting his sister, the mother superior in a convent: he reproaches her for having shown some neglect regarding an afflicted nun.[842] As mother superior Matrona was responsible for the practical running and financial affairs of the convent, although according to the text, she delegated much of the business dealings to the deacon Markellos, who functioned as a middleman taking care of the practical and financial aspects of the operations.[843] Markellos is also Matrona's contact in communicating with Bassianos, her superior and teacher of monastic rules.[844] Despite being responsible for the running of the convent, the mother superior was *de facto* in the end subordinate to some male cleric in the ecclesiastic hierarchy, either the bishop of the city to which the convent belonged or the *igoumen* or prior of the male monastery to which the convent was spiritually and administratively connected. Matrona's convent was a branch of Bassianos' monastery and under the same monastic rules.[845] Nevertheless, she was the leader of her convent and of importance in her own right. According to Theophanes, she and her convent were among the champions of the doctrines from the Council at Chalcedon in the theological controversy of the last years of the 5th century, her resistance and actions being of some consequence.[846]

Theodore had some authority over the convent of St. Christopher, which was close to his own monastery in Sykeon. The text is not clear on the nature of this relationship, but he not only visited the convent and its nuns, but also planned a visit of inspection.[847] Bishop Adelphios of Arabesso scolds his sister, the mother superior, for neglecting her duties, although it is not clear in what capacity he does this - as a brother, a bishop and religious leader, or as having authority over and responsibility for the convent.[848] The situation was slightly different in the convent of Trichinaera on Mount Auxentos, in that the female monastery both preceded the male one and prevailed after it was destroyed, and the *hegoumenissa* seems to have had some authority over the whole spiritual community, including the male hermits. Even here, contact with the outer world, as in the commission of a *vita* for St. Stephen the Younger, was handled through male emissaries.[849] The *Life of St. Anthousa*, on the other hand depicts the saint as the head of a large double monastery in Paphlagonia built around 740: her nephew administered the male monastery and might have functioned as her deputy, but Anthousa was the superior of the whole complex, not only of the female convent.[850] Matrona, in turn, having set up her convent and functioning as its mother

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[841] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapters 31 & 37. When her disciples arrived in the capital from Beirut they referred to Matrona as their mother superior, although she moved to the newly established convent later on.
[842] Moschos, *Prat.Spir*., chapter 128.
[843] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapters 40, 43, 45, 46.
[844] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapters 41 & 50.
[845] *Life to St. Matrona of Perge*, especially chapters 50 - 52, but also 14, 24, 29 - 31, 41, & 45.
[846] Theophanes, *Chron.* 5991 [AD 498/9].
[847] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapters 25, 46 & 124
[848] Moschos, *Prat.Spir.* chapter 128
[849] Auzépry 1997, 9-19.
[850] *Life of St. Anthousa of Mantineon*, 17-8 (*SynaxCP* 850-1). Talbot (ed.) 1998, 13-4.

superior, seemed to channel much of her contact with the surrounding society through the deacon Markellos or the visitors she received in the convent. This correlates with behaviour befitting a respectable *matrona*, who was supposed to conduct necessary business by receiving people in her house rather than venturing out into public spaces.

Similarly, the life of nuns was, in theory at least, constricted to the space inside the convent. Nuns were only to meet visitors inside this mostly self-chosen confined area, but on special request it seems that they could include not only women and clergymen but also lay male persons, on pious grounds. The desire to visit a famously pious person was the pretext Matrona's husband used when trying to reach her at the convent in Emesa.[851] There were also special occasions and circumstances allowing nuns to venture outside of their constricted space. The episode from Matrona's life, when she and nuns from the same convent took part in the ceremony of transporting the newly found relics of John the Baptist to a church, is mentioned above.[852] *Pratum Spirituale*, in turn, tells of the wife of a senator on a pilgrimage who wants to stay in Caesarea to live 'in silence', and therefore asks the bishop to send her a 'virgin' (either a church virgin or a nun) as an uplifting spiritual companion. This person then lives with the lady instead of in a convent or her own dwelling.[853] The position of both the virgin and the senatorial lady could be compared with that of church virgins and widows living their religious lives in their own houses or in other private dwellings.

As discussed earlier, the family was the main unit of association even for monastics, and especially so for women entering convents.[854] Still part of a family, they might be involved in family-related matters. Visiting family was a legitimate reason for a nun to venture outside the convent. Papyri from Egypt show that monastic women were parties in financial transactions related to the family fortune, sometimes signing for themselves, and assumingly they would have to visit a public notary or other place to sign these contracts if the documents were not brought to them, which of course is another possibility.[855]

The dividing lines between different types of ecclesiastic women are not always clear, and a woman's status might change during her life, or she may simultaneously have several roles. The *Life of St. Matrona* gives several examples of this. Eugenia, who might have belonged to the category of church widows, is also mentioned as Matrona's spiritual guide and teacher.[856] Later, as a nun, she moves with Matrona to her newly founded convent.[857] Matrona's young disciples in Beirut might first have been regarded as church virgins, not being associated with a proper convent at this point.[858] Later they move with Matrona to her convent and must be considered nuns.[859] The deaconesses in Beirut helping with the instruction and baptism of the female proselytes, as well as

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[851] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 13. See Chapter. III.B, 125.
[852] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 12. See Chapters III.A, 106, III.B, 124.
[853] Moschos, *Prat.Spir.* chapter 206. See Chapter III.B, 123, also, VII.B, 237.
[854] See Chapter II.B, 65.
[855] E.g. *P. Prag*. I 42 (from the early 6th century). See Beaucamp 1992, 209-10, & note 83.
[856] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge,* chapters 2 - 5.
[857] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge,* chapter 36.
[858] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge,* chapters 19 - 23 & 27.
[859] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge,* chapter 37.

being in charge of the young disciples during Matrona's absence, function with her as the young women's spiritual guides, guardians and teachers.[860] The text also mentions that after Matrona's death the deaconess Mosilia succeeded her and therefore became mother superior.[861] There was some shifting between female ecclesiastical roles: a woman could progress between them or act in several capacities. Matrona assumed most of the roles discussed here, from wife and pious lay woman to ascetic, nun, spiritual teacher and mother superior, finally to attain the status of female sainthood.

The story of Matrona also sheds light on the networks that existed among ecclesiastic as well as lay women. Eugenia and Susannah were Matrona's guides and her connection in her quest for a religious lifestyle, and a network of 'freewomen' in Beirut helped, through their contacts, to arrange her trip back to Constantinople. Despite their withdrawn lifestyle, women leading a life of religious devotion were connected to the surrounding society. The most isolated religious personae were, judging from the source material, women living as hermits, often in secluded areas, whereas deaconesses and church widows could be active in ecclesiastical functions such as baptisms, tutoring, charity work and church services, often also residing in urban areas.

Finally, **female saints** must be considered. An individual, of course, is normally only regarded as a saint after death, so it is the symbolic presence that should be evaluated. Female saints were much fewer in number than male ones, as are their hagiographies, but some female characters ascended to such a level.[862] Whereas life as an ascetic as well as other female ecclesiastic roles in part, at least on an ideal level, meant withdrawal from public life, becoming a saint meant becoming a public figure, even if not a live person, acting as a symbol and a model as well as a religious pictorial and literary motif. The public side becomes the prominent aspect when a deceased person is elevated to sainthood. The *vitae* of female saints were written down and were read, and their respective feast days were celebrated in churches. Female saints were depicted in church mosaics and wall paintings and on other artefacts. Preserved art representations from the 6th to the 8th centuries are sparse, but there are some medallions with busts of female saints depicted together with male saints in the bishop's palace in Ravenna, in addition to the row of 22 female saints in the mosaic in San Apollinare Nuovo.[863] Not only do the mid-6th-century mosaics in the Cathedral of Eufrasius at Poreč, in Istria, assign the Virgin Mary a prominent position in the apse, the arch above it contains medallions depicting twelve female saints along both sides of the Lamb of God, equalling

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[860] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge,* chapters 22 - 23, 27 & 31. See Chapters III.A, 112, III.D, 134-6.

[861] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge,* chapter 52.

[862] Talbot 1994, 105. Cf. Talbot 2001, 2-3, 14-16, and Kazhdan & Talbot 1991/1992, 393. After centuries of the imperial persecution of Christians, which produced many martyrs and saints both male and female, the *Synaxarion* of Constantinople records 14 female saints for the 4th - 5th centuries, only four from the 6th century and none from the 7th. The iconoclastic era of the mid-to-late 8th century and the first half of the 9th produced eight female saints, Kazhdan & Talbot 1991/1992, 392. Herrin notes that female saints usually came from the higher social strata, Herrin 1983, 72. Talbot remarks that female saints are usually grouped together, categorised by gender, both in the literature and when depicted in art, whereas male saints tend to be classified as martyrs, monastic heroes or bishops, for example Talbot 2001, 1.

[863] Deichmann 1969, 30-1, 119, 173, 199-206, and Deichmann 1989, 184-6. For S. Apollinare Nuovo, also von Simson 1948, 81-8.

the twelve apostles standing on each side of Christ on the mosaic above.[864] There were also chapels dedicated to female saints, such as the one to St. Febronia in the church of St. John the Baptist in Constantinople.[865] As Talbot points out, men as well as women were involved in the cult of female saints, reading their *vitae,* and making pilgrimages to their shrines.[866] A visual exemplification is a 8th / 9th-century icon in St. Catherine's monastery in Sinai depicting St. Irene with a male donor.[867] Female saints thus represent a further public side of female religious *personae*.

Despite the popularity of religious educational stories and saints' lives amongst literary sources, religious *personae* represented a relatively small proportion of the population, and women an even smaller one. Nevertheless, female religious *personae* did play a part in the religious arena of Byzantine society and in public space, both on the factual level as deaconesses, church virgins and widows, and nuns involved in public celebrations and practical tasks, as well as on an abstract level in different art forms (textual and pictorial) as legendary female saints and models for female religiosity.[868]

Whereas many of the religious practices of lay women were relatively private, some took place in public space. Religious or pious acts, although expressions of personal faith, tended to be connected to public activities, hence women frequented public space in different ways through their participation in religious life. On a symbolic level, they were visible through the effects of their donations and their charity work, or as motifs in religious art. The symbolic aspect continued in moral and religious literature, female piety being publicised as an example.

Like all female presence in public space, certain boundaries of decorum were attached to female behaviour in connection with religious activities. Many of the women featured in the narratives are in the company of appropriate persons, be it their husbands, servants, other women, or other suitable devotees such as fellow pilgrims. The religious connotation of the activities and their public space in itself gave a certain protection to female propriety. The sources present it as normal for women to take part in religious activities.

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[864] Prelog 1986, 9, 19-25, Pls. 12, 24-6, 32-8, 48, Maguire 2007, 146-9, 155-7, Fig. 34, Maguire 2011, 39, 42, Pls. 3.1-3. Cf. Milinović 2000, 362-3.

[865] *Mir. St. Art*., nos. 24, and Crisafulli & Nesbitt 1997, 13-4. St. Febronia is presented as a female 'assistant' to St. Artemios for female patients, see e.g. mir. no. 45. Also, Cristafulli & Nesbitt 1997, 262, 265-6.

[866] Talbot 2001, 16.

[867] Weitzmann 1976, 66, and Pl. 26 (icon B.39).

[868] The Virgin Mary was popular, but Old and New Testament figures also occur in art. Female martyrs and apostolic followers earned devotion in icons and cults. Some *topoi* of female sanctity were popular in the early Byzantine period, such as reformed harlots and women disguised as monks, often combined with severe asceticism. Only from the 9th century does the focus turn to suffering saintly wives, or *coenobic* nuns. Cf. Talbot 2001, 2-16.

IV Work outside the home and participation in economic life

The emphasis in this chapter is on secular work outside the domestic sphere and female participation in economic life. References to female work and women's activities are rather elusive in the source material. The little evidence there is of women working outside the home tends to concentrate on a few areas such as working in inns, as entertainers or prostitutes, occupations in which they clearly crossed into the space of a masculine world. It is therefore difficult to paint a comprehensive picture, but sketches can be drawn from what is preserved. Some female occupations related to typical women's tasks inside the home,[869] whereas others clashed to some extent with the traditional roles of respectable women. Issues considered in the following sub-chapters include feasible occupations for women, their presence outside the domestic sphere for the sake of work or earning a living, and other financial activities in which they were involved.

Scholars such as Laiou, Herrin and Talbot briefly touch on female occupations corresponding with women's work within the domestic sphere. Laiou discusses the involvement of women in the production of cloth for other purposes than family and domestic consumption.[870] Herrin, in turn, mentions selling prepared food on the streets, marketing produce grown in and around the city and working and running small businesses from home as possible financial activities for women.[871] Talbot makes similar remarks: "women's primary duties within the home were raising children, preparing food, and making cloth. Many of the jobs that women held outside their own homes were an extension of these basic household occupations". She specifically refers to occupations such as cook, baker, washerwoman, cloth maker, seller of groceries, female purveyor of bread, vegetable, fish and milk, and children's nurse.[872]

Another category of female occupations related to social needs and demands. Herrin notes that, paradoxically, the segregation of the sexes also created opportunities for women to work in female-related jobs. Talbot further points out that there were professions involving intimate contact with women and/or children, which by necessity had to be practised by other women.[873] Such occupations included matchmaker, wet nurse, children's nurse, maidservant, attendant at public baths for women, hairdresser, deaconess, midwife, gynaecologist, attendant in the female ward of a hospital[874], and even possibly female doctor. Supplying food products was also a suitable occupation for women in this sense, as many of their dealings would have been with women shopping for groceries. Talbot also claims that vendors sometimes peddled goods from house to house, facilitating

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869 Cf. Laiou 1986, 120, Talbot 1997, 130-1, Herrin 1984, 169-70.

870 Laiou 1986, 120.

871 Herrin 1984, 169-70. Cf. Laiou 1981, 245-6.

872 Talbot 1997, 130-1. Cf. illustration in the *Wiener Genesis*, depicting female servants attending to children and spinning, *Cod.Vindob.Theol.Graec. 31.*, fol. 16 r. (Fig. 1a). Cf. Arjava 1996, 248. See also, Chapter II.A, 59.

873 Herrin 1984, 169-80, Talbot 1997, 131.

874 As Miller 1984, 56, 61-2 notes, by the 7th century charitable institutions tending the sick had developed into proper hospitals and, at least in the 12th century, there is evidence of female medical assistants on the women's wards. At that time women were employed in hospitals also for other purposes, e.g. as laundresses.

their purchasing without customers having to leave their houses.[875] In this way some women working outside home made it easier for other women to minimise their public appearances and their contact with men from outside their familiar circle.

Finally, there were female occupations dictated by other societal demands, or that women pursued or were driven into despite conflicting with customarily accepted roles for women and prudent female behaviour: examples include working as an innkeeper, a performing artist or a prostitute. The first section below focuses on various trades and crafts, as well as service jobs, whereas occupations related to art, culture and performance are discussed in the following section.

A. Trade, crafts, and service

Crafts connected to the textile industry were a natural extension of female domestic work. There is a fragmentary papyrus from the end of the 5th or the beginning of the 6th century in Egypt mentioning a young girl who is put into apprenticeship to become an embroiderer.[876] This shows that a girl could be intended for a profession from her youth. In the *vita* of Mary of Egypt, the monk Zosimas is told how Mary, being poor, supported herself in her youth in Alexandria by begging and often by spinning coarse flax fibres.[877] It is told in the *Lives of Eastern Saints* how the widow Euphemia and her daughter earned their living by weaving goat's wool yarn for the noblewomen in the city of Amida. Another chapter describes how one of the nuns following the devotee Susan to the desert beyond Alexandria managed to bring the nuns work to perform from a nearby village to pay for their upkeep. What the work was is not clear, but it may have been some form of handicraft.[878]

Laiou has conducted some research on women's participation in cloth production. Although her work relates mainly to the late Byzantine period, some of her points are relevant here. She found that women in the Byzantine Empire did participate actively in the production of cloth. According to a text written by Michael Psellos in the 11th century, women could also work as wage-earning cloth makers, mainly in charge of tasks such as making linen, carding wool, spinning and weaving, whereas wool dyeing is presented as a male occupation. Laiou also notes that even if cloth-making was associated with the female role, it was not exclusively a female occupation.[879] The details of how this cloth production was organised are unclear. Production organised around small family workshops and surplus from domestic production should also be considered. The stories mentioned above point in this direction. In such cases women's participation in the work did not necessarily

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[875] Talbot 1997, 131.

[876] *P. Aberd.* 59. Beaucamp 1992, 159 n. 5.

[877] *Life of St. Mary of Egypt*, chapter 18, (text probably from the 6th century). She tells of her 17 years of wanton life but clams it was out of lust and not for money, so she had to support herself by other means available.

[878] John of Ephesus, *Lives*, chapters 12 & 27 (6th century) (Brock & Harvey, 1987, 126, 136).

[879] Laiou 1981, 244-5. Cf. Talbot 1997, 130-1, notes the existence of male weavers and so forth. Wool dyeing was a male task because it was heavy work, frequently carried out standing in large open-air basins handling wool that was heavy from the dyed water. The preparation of thread and the weaving of cloth, on the other hand, could easily be done by women even in their own homes. As Morrisson & Sodini 2002, 204-5 note: "textile work was one of the most important commercial activities of antiquity", and there were both imperial factories and private workshops. Some imperial wool mills were actually called *gynaecae.* Cf. also Arjava 1996, 248.

require their presence in public space, except on the occasions for exchanging and paying for produce: they could make their contributions from within a more private and, in terms of female modesty, a more acceptable sphere. In another article, again related to the 11th century, Laiou discusses the possibility that women were involved in guild activity as craftsmen producing silk, cloth and clothes.[880] Guilds were more about intentional manufacturing for retail than selling surplus domestic production. They also gave occasion for public visibility, via common activities or appearances on special religious feast days such as the festival of Agathe, for example. Unfortunately, there is no corresponding material for earlier centuries.

Female merchants feature in several 6th-century papyri. One papyrus, for example, concerns a widow who for thirteen years provided for the upbringing of her four children through her work as a florist or flower vendor, thereby earning enough to give away her three daughters in marriage.[881] Another informs of a female vendor of salted meat and food.[882] One mentions a wine-merchant named Maria and another has a note of payment for wine made to a woman named Thaesia.[883] Laiou is of the opinion that women's participation in retail trade was of importance, and they seemed to be particularly active as producers and sellers of foodstuff. She mentions women as owners and sometimes operators of small shops in Byzantine cities. She considers that many received such shops as dowries and occasionally participated with their dowry money in small family retail businesses.[884] Wives of minor functionaries in small communities could earn money by providing for travellers or merchants, as seems to be evidenced in a late-6th or early-7th-century papyrus from Nessana: the account of a trade company mentions a payment of one *solidi* to a guardsman's wife in Emazen during a journey.[885]

Merely financing a business did not necessarily entail much public activity, but if the woman also worked as a vendor her business inevitably put her in contact with people outside her domestic sphere. Talbot also refers to wives helping their artisan husbands in the workshop, noting that many of these workshops were connected to the family living quarters.[886] The *Miracles of St. Artemios* tells the story of a nine-year-old patient, Georg, who was being trained by both his parents in their business of bartering and exchanging gold.[887] Working in the family business did not necessarily entail much public exposure in that women could do their work in private, in accordance with the prevailing ideas of female prudence and behaviour.

A Constantinian law, reproduced in *Codex Justinianus*, includes women publicly engaged in

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[880] Laiou 1986, 117-122.

[881] *P. Cair. Masp.* II 67156 (570). Beaucamp 1992, 179.

[882] *P. Coll. Youtie* II 92 [*P. Cair. Masp*. I 67023] (569): a certain Martha, daughter of Menes, in Antinooupolis manages through her business to acquire the funds needed to free her younger sister Prokla, who had been given as guaranty by their father. Beaucamp 1992, 205. Both men and women merchandised food products, e.g. *Life of St. Mary of Egypt*, chapter 36, mentions a man as a vendor of bread in Jerusalem.

[883] *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67146 (6th century), *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67138 (541-546). Ruffini 2011, 355, 562.

[884] Laiou 1981, 245-6. Cf. Talbot 1997, 130-1. Unfortunately, both articles are short presentations on a rather general level, without clear indications on what material these suppositions are based.

[885] Kraemer 1958, 251-2, 256, 258, no. 89.

[886] Talbot 1997, 127, 130-1.

[887] *Mir. St. Art*., no. 38. (7th century). On their trade, see Dagron 2002, 436.

the business of being merchants among the categories of women forbidden to marry high dignitaries, precisely because of the public exposure. In this they are paralleled with innkeepers and cabaret performers, for example, who were also tainted by the public aspect of their profession and their low status, and were therefore unsuitable as spouses for men in the higher strata of society.[888] This shows how any woman working in public easily was branded, a tendency that was particularly strong under Emperor Constantine but that was present earlier, and is also repeated in juridical texts of the early 6th century. At the same time, such laws provide evidence that women were engaged in merchant activities.[889] Legal marriage restrictions were not likely to be a deterrent in the choice of an occupation in that women with a commercial social background did not necessarily aspire to marry into the higher strata of society. In practice, any blemish associated with mercantile work may well not have been too severe or permanent on the local social level. As a comparison let us consider, for example, the tale of St. Theodore of Sykeon's mother, who kept an inn with her own mother and sister in the earlier part of her life.[890] A woman keeping a tavern or an inn tended to be afflicted with a dubious reputation, and female innkeepers were usually categorised with prostitutes and other ill-famed women of a low social status.[891] This did not necessarily destroy their future prospects if there was a change of lifestyle and some wealth was involved. Theodore's mother, a former innkeeper and a single mother of illegitimate children (Theodore and probably also his younger sister Blatta) is said later to have married a leading citizen in the nearby city of Ancyra, whereas his grandmother ended up administrating a convent and a charitable institution, and so redeemed her former reputation through leading a religious life.[892] Their previous lifestyle and occupation did not totally discredit these women in society, nor did it destroy their chances of changing their social situations, especially given that details in the text reveal that they had accumulated some wealth.[893]

The story in the *Life of St. Mary / Marinos* about the daughter of an innkeeper is slightly different. She is seduced and becomes pregnant by a soldier passing through the inn. When the

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[888] *Just.* 5.27.1, see also *Just.* 5.5.7. Cf. Beaucamp 1990, 284-288. However, Justinian legislation did make provisions for actresses leaving their profession to marry men of rank, *Just*. 1.4.33, *Just.* 5.4.23, *Nov.* 51, and *Nov.* 117 c. 6 (AD 542). Cf. Foss 2002, 150. See Laiou 2001, 263-4, 266, on the connection between social status and female activities outside the home and in marketplaces, as well as between dowries and social restraints on work outside the household (for the 10th - 14th centuries).

[889] Cf. Arjava 1996, 248-9.

[890] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 3. On the socio-economic importance of taverns, inns and bathhouses in 6th - 7th-century Byzantium, the differences between roadside inns and taverns in towns or cities, and Theodore of Sykeon's female relatives, see Magoulias 1971, 233, 238, 242.

[891] Talbot 1997, 131, notes that inns could function as dwellings for prostitution. Theodore's family of female innkeepers are also said to have followed the profession of courtesans. Law texts tend to bundle female innkeepers with other less reputable women, see e.g. Beaucamp 1990, 203-4. See also Magoulias 1971, 241-3. Moschos, *Prat.Spir.*, chapter 188, illustrates how debauchery was easily associated with women in inns. A Syrian money-lender mistakenly taking communion with Monophysite monks considered heretics is symbolised in a vision as him committing adultery with a tavern-keeper's wife.

[892] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapters 3 & 25. Cf. Connor 2004, 149, 152-154, and Beaucamp 1992, 315.

[893] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapters 5-7, 9, 12, 25, 33, 55, 102. The women did not prepare the food in the inn but had a male chef and servants working for them. When Theodore was six years old his mother, preparing him for a trip to Constantinople to enter him in the service of the Emperor, purchased fine and expensive clothes, a gold belt, and jewellery including a bracelet and a necklace. His aunt left him an inheritance, which he used to enhance his monastery, and he was entitled to his mother's dowry from her marriage.

pregnancy becomes clear, at her lover's instigation she blames the presumed monk Marinos (the disguised Mary). The raging father makes his way to the monastery shouting the accusation "I had but a single daughter, who I hoped would support me in my old age, but look at what Marinos has done to her".[894] The connection to an inn does not seem to be an impediment to the daughter's future marriage prospects or to her father's hopes for a secure old age, but the pregnancy and an illegitimate child are, according to the father. Public houses could certainly put a woman's reputation in jeopardy, but the connection was not conclusive in itself. Personal conduct and circumstances played their part, whereas wealth could smoothen things.

Keeping a tavern or an inn was to serve the general public, a job that included contact with strangers, mainly men. Most other service occupations practiced by women probably involved tasks associated with traditional female roles such as childcare, or originated in the need to segregate women or to preserve their modesty.[895]

Nursing and caring for children as such did not take women into the public sphere. This type of work by its character was generally done inside the family house, as was wet nursing - either in the house of the child's family or in the wet nurse's own home. Beaucamp studied the breastfeeding of children by nurses during the 4th to the 7th centuries. According to her findings, poor people and villagers used wet nurses only when circumstances necessitated it, but rich people were more likely to employ them: in some social classes it may well have been the only option in that it was not considered proper for a mother to breastfeed. Not surprisingly, there were differences in practice between these social classes: villagers sent their children away to wet nurses, whereas rich people employed them in their own houses and households.[896]

Nursing children was domestic in nature, but the women for whom it was an occupation tended to come from the lower levels of society and their duties could take them into the public sphere. A poem by Palladas of Alexandria (probably from the 3rd or 4th century) describes the nurses of schoolboys coming to the teacher with the monthly fee for their education.[897] Another poem from the 6th century, written by Agathias, mentions an old woman watching over a young maiden's behaviour in social company. Is is not clear if the woman is a nurse or a servant, but the language

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[894] *Life of St. Mary / Marinos*, chapters 9 - 10, (anonymous text from the 6th - 7th centuries). Similar circumstances are described in the *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 3: the mother became pregnant by a performer at the Hippodrome in Constantinople who had been dispatched on imperial orders to the eastern parts of the Empire. Cf. Constantinou 2005, 93-5, 115-117, on the story of Mary / Marinos, as well as two other cross-dressing female saints, Susanna and Theodora (from the 4th and 5th centuries, respectively) accused of having seduced a woman or fathering a child. See also Casey 2013, 176.

[895] Cf. e.g. Herrin 1984, 169, Talbot 1997, 131.

[896] Beaucamp 1982, 551-2. She also discusses values related to wet nursing. Some Church fathers and hagiographies describe it as a virtue for the mother to nurse the child herself, but this did not change the fact that wet nurses were preferred in better families. Some wet nurses of the imperial family are known by name: Fermina, the nurse of the daughter of the future Emperor Justin II, for example, known through her epitaph. (Inscription funéraire de Constantinople citée par Ad. Wilhelm, Τροφός, *Glotta*, 16, 1928, 277). The physician Aëtios, XVI.35-36 (early 6th century), discusses how to stop mother's milk flowing and to take care of the mother's breasts, which also hints at the use of wet nurses in finer families. The law gave wet nurses the right to act in the interests of their wards, given the bond of fondness that developed between them, *Dig.* 26.10.1 (7).

[897] *Anth. Gr.* IX:174.

used seems to imply that she is a nurse.[898] Another of Agathias' poems specifically refers to an old nurse watching over the desired young woman.[899] Thus, although their work was ostensibly in the domestic sphere, responsibilities such as chaperoning their protegees and running errands took these women into the public space.

Another occupation related to women and children, and which wavered between the private and the public spheres, was that of the midwife. As Talbot notes, most women gave birth at home assisted by midwives or female relatives and neighbours, but occasionally they might give birth in hospital: she specifically mentions the maternity wards for poor women established in Alexandria by the patriarch John in the early 7th century.[900] Erkki Sironen mentions in his reserch a funeral inscription from 5th/6th-century Athens for Susannah the Midwife.[901] The need to protect female modesty could broaden the scope of a professional midwife's work. The 16th book of the opus on medical practice from the early 6th century written by Aëtios of Amidas deals with all sorts of female maladies as well as childbirth.[902] He considers that midwives might help with therapy that would be improper for a male doctor to administer to a woman. They could be instructed to do some examinations or administer treatment to a woman's genitals, and be used more generally as a middle hand in situations involving a woman's bodily matters when a male presence would be improper.[903] It seems from Aëtios' text that midwives, as well as other women concerned with female health, were educated or instructed in performing certain medical procedures.[904] The woman giving birth or being treated stayed in her private domestic space, but the midwife caring for her had to venture into public space and enter the private sphere of others.

A similar category of women caring for women were nurses on female hospital wards.[905] Just as the deaconess was needed at the baptismal of adult female proselytes, women were needed to protect female modesty during physical health treatment. Some texts mention female healers, probably working from home, who also received male patients. One story in *Pratum spirituale* tells of a hermit who was bitten by a snake and went to the nearest town to get treatment. A pious woman received him and treated him, but the man fell into temptation and felt desire for the woman. She managed to talk him out of it with her calm behaviour and was able to finish treating him.[906] The

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[898] *Anth. Gr.* V:289. Cf. a poem by Agathias on an artwork depicting Hippolytus conversing with Phaedra's Nurse, who is called an old wife, *Anth. Gr.* XVI:109.

[899] *Anth. Gr.* V:262. Although the nurse watching the maid is an old *topos*, there is no reason to assume that the situation did not have its analogues in real life. Cf. Herrin 2013, 85.

[900] Talbot 1997, 124-5. *Life of St. John the Almsgiver*, chapter A7. Cf. Laiou 1981, 245. See also, Chapter III.D, 133.

[901] Sironen 1997, 126, no. 45.

[902] Talbot 1997, 125, mentions the book, but does not dwell on it. Beaucamp 1992, 326, refers to other texts in her discussion on abortion, but she does not mention Aëtios' book XVI, which includes some lengthy discussions on the subject (e.g. chapters 16 & 21). The text does not seem to be well known or used among scholars.

[903] E.g. Aëtios, XVI.14-15 & 22-23, discusses midwives in connection with childbirth. Cf. Herrin 1984, 169-70, and Talbot 1997, 131, who mentions women specifically working as gynaecologists.

[904] Se e.g. Aëtios, XVI.22, 67 & 73, on how to instruct a midwife to do necessary procedures in the uterus.

[905] Both Laiou 1981, 245, and Talbot 1997, 131, mention the existence of female physicians, but without further elaboration on the source material. Miller 1984, 61, provides evidence of the existence of female medical assistants on women's wards from the 12th-century *typicon* for the Pantokrator Xenon, or hospital, in Constantinople.

[906] Moschos, *Prat.spir.*, chapter 204.

situation was sensitive, but no blame is put on the woman for giving the treatment and receiving a male patient. She is characterised as a pious God-loving person and depicted as capable of averting indecent proposals and approaches from male outsiders.

Yet another job was connected to exposed female bodies and the need to protect the women's modesty and preserve their decency. As long as there were public baths there was a need for female bath attendants.[907] Entire baths might be reserved for female use, a section of a bath complex could be assigned to women, or separate times could be designated in baths used by both men and women.[908] A female bath attendant may not have been in contact exclusively with female guests. A story in the *Miracles of St. Artemios* tells of a woman in charge of a double baths. She lives close by with her husband and baby boy, but the narrative makes it clear that she is the one tending to the baths and receiving the guests, males included.[909] Bath attendants had duties that associated them with people outside the family and in the non-domestic sphere. The life of St. John the Almsgiver, for example, mentions a male servant who was a hot-water carrier at the baths in Alexandria, although there is no indication whether or not these baths were intended for both men and women.[910] In any case, these types of tasks were needed in all baths, regardless of whether they were for male or female customers.

There probably were other occupations that functioned as mediators between certain women and society, or cared for female needs. Talbot mentions hairdressers and matchmakers.[911] The problem is the lack of evidence in the sources given their marginal interest in female facets of society. Different aspects of gender segregation are discussed in more detail in Chapter VII.C.

Finally, there is the question of female servants. Slavery still existed in the Byzantine society,[912] but many people were also employed as servants.[913] Wet nurses and children's nurses may have belonged to this category, so may doorkeepers. There is mention of a female doorkeeper even in the humble quarters of Matrona in Constantinople.[914] When the author of *Pratum spirituale* and his companion went to visit the sophist Stephanos at his home in Alexandria a young girl peeked out from behind the front door.[915] If she was a daughter this would surely have been mentioned, so one might presume she was a young servant: whether she was an employee or a slave cannot be

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907 Herrin 1984, 169, refers to female bath attendants as well attested, but gives no further information. On the socio-economic importance of bathhouses in 6th-7th century Byzantium see e.g. Magoulias 1971, 233.

908 See Leontios, *St. Symeon*, chapter 14 (7th century) on two closely situated baths in Emesa, one for women, the other for men. *Anth. Gr.* IX:620 (6th century), a poem by Paulos Silentiarios on a double bath for men and women, with the sections separated by a small closed door. *Anth. Gr.* IX:783, an anonymous poem on a bath used for both men and women. *Anth. Gr.* IX:625 (6th century), by Macedonius the Consul, describes the doorkeeper keeping track of time for male bathers to enter so as not to see naked Naiads or Aphrodite with the Graces.

909 *Mir. St. Art*., no. 11. Cf. Magoulias 1971, 237.

910 *Life of St. John the Almsgiver,* chapter 1. (early 7th century)

911 Talbot 1997, 131.

912 For non-literary sources on slavery see e.g. a papyrus from Nessana (late 6th or early 7th century) with the accounts of a trading company, Kraemer 1958, 251, 255, 257, no.89. The list includes, among other things, the price paid for a slave girl (3 *solidi*), a slave boy (6 *solidi*) and two camels (6 1/3 & 4 1/3 *solidi*).

913 Cf. Talbot 1997, 126-7, 131.

914 *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 35.

915 Moschos, *Prat.spir.*, chapter 77.

determined from the story. Indeed, the sources are not always clear on this. In either case, these women represented the lower strata of the social hierarchy.[916] They had duties that would be improper for their mistresses to carry out, including assignments in public space.[917] As mentioned above, children's nurses called on teachers to pay tutorial fees,[918] and maidservants accompanied girls and women as chaperones.[919] Not all of their tasks were with necessity those that the mistress could not undertake herself, but female servants and slave girls might be sent on errands without much consideration for their reputation, and they must have been seen regularly on the streets and in other public spaces. Some women employed in the household had positions of responsibility: the story of Athanasia tells of a female chief stewardess in charge of all her mistress's movable property.[920]

The importance of maidservants to women of high status is reflected in the fact that such women were allowed maidservants when they moved to a convent, and there could also be communal maidservants.[921] Their duties could take them outside the convent, where the nuns could not venture under the rules of monastic life. Three of lady Athanasia's servants entered into the convent with her, but the text only states that they lived there as nuns.[922] Theodore of Studios, in turn, praises his mother for her strict continence in her life as a nun and explicitly mentions that she did not have maidservants or other luxuries.[923]

Most women entering a convent did so of their own accord and could have their servants with them. The situation was different for imprisoned women, however, although even they could be minded by women: Theodore of Stoudios claims that his mother had to suffer some ill-treatment from the maidservants of the jailer while she was imprisoned for 30 days.[924]

Occupations related to traditional female tasks were probably considered more appropriate for women than other professions. Nevertheless, any group of female workers fell somewhat short of the ideal vision of women's role in society, which was inevitably connected to the domestic sphere and the family. The professions discussed above took women into the more public sphere, or into other people's households in varying degrees. It is impossible, however, to estimate from the available material how large a proportion of the female population belonged to this category.

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[916] Despite their low status slaves could be well cared for. The *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, (chapters 84, 92, 94 and 140) tells of two female slaves being brought by their owners (one a mistress, the other a master) to be cured, three further female slaves are cured, and when Theodore visits the *curopalates* Domnitzioulus all male and female slaves are brought before him for a blessing. In the *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 44, Athanasia frees some of her slaves and provides them with houses before entering Matrona's convent, whereas others follow her.

[917] Cf. Talbot 1997, 129, 131, who notes that women of the lower classes could seldom afford servants and had duties that took them into public spaces, or even had jobs outside the home.

[918] *Anth. Gr.* IX:174. See 149.

[919] Cf. *Anth.Gr.* V:262 & 289, and Talbot 1997, 120. Poems quoted in Chapter VII.A, 229.

[920] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 42.

[921] Kazhdan & Talbot 1991/1992, 394-5, Talbot 1997, 138-9.

[922] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 47.

[923] Theod. Stud. *Laudatio,* § 13. (Written between 797 and 802)

[924] Theod. Stud. *Laudatio,* § 10.

B. Artistic entertainers

A profession that indeed put women in the public arena and endangered their moral reputation was that of a performing artist. Such women included actresses, mime actors, dancers and musicians. This category of female professionals deserves special attention in that it stands in stark contrast to traditional ideals. Working as a performing artist, by its very nature, entails appearing before the public, typically in a relatively public space. The female performing artist in her own way exemplifies the occasional conflict between ideals on the one hand and praxis on the other.

There were some hereditary aspects of the profession of an actress where mothers handed it down to daughters in Late Antiquity.[925] Justinian law stipulates that no one can force a woman to take up or stay in this profession against her will.[926] Female actresses and dancers participated in performances staged for the general public, and it may have been in the interest of the provincial governor to keep them in their profession so as to secure the availability of popular entertainment. Both freeborn women and slaves worked as actresses. According to Beaucamp, it was the public nature of the performance that, in one sense, connected this profession with prostitution. Leontsini and Herrin also refer to the narrow division between the two professions.[927]

Empress Theodora's background in the entertainment business is probably the best known case.[928] Although biased by his aspiration to marry a former performer, Justinian's modifications to legislation affecting female entertainers and former prostitutes indicate attitudes of the of possible redemption for such women in 6th-century Byzantine society.[929] The capital, at least, had many female performers and their presence as part of the entertainment culture was visible.[930] The stipulation imposed by the *Council in Trullo* that connection with a woman doing theatrical performances would prevent a man from entering an ecclesiastic order shows that female performers still existed in the late 7th century.[931]

Agathias Scholasticus' *Kyklos* alone contains some 15 poems referring to female performers,

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925 Beaucamp 1990, 130, and Beaucamp 1992, 353.

926 *Just.* 5.4.29. pr.-(5) (between 531 and 534). Beaucamp 1990, 130. Cf. *Nov*. 51 (AD 534), and *Nov.* 117 chapter 6 (AD 542), and Foss 2002, 150.

927 See Beaucamp 1990, 128-132 & 206-208, Beaucamp 1992, 338, 353, Leontsini 1989, 28-30, 121-130, Herrin 1984, 170. Talbot 1997, 131, briefly mentions innkeepers, public entertainers and prostitutes, and the frequent association with prostitution of the two first-mentioned professions. Cf. Foss 2002, 167.

928 Procopius, *Anecd.* 9.11-12. See Garland 1999, 11-15, for a discussion on the plausibility of Procopius' account and the possible realities behind it. Brubaker 2004a, 91-94, 100-101, claims that the *Anecdota* is almost solely fiction rather than fact. See also Foss 2002, 141-3, 154-5, and Cameron 2006a, 125.

929 Procopius, *Anecd.* 9.51. See e.g. Garland 1999, 14, for a discussion on Justinian's legislative measures.

930 Cameron 2006a, 125, remarks that although dancing was condemned in Church literature, and that public dancing was forbidden by the *Council in Trullo* (691/2), 51, dancers were a common motif on artefacts such as textiles, ceramics, silver and ivory. Cf. Rutschowscaya 1990, 102-3, 108-11, Neiiendam 1992, 100-5, 120-1 and Herrin 1992, 102-3, on canon 63 condemning women's dancing in public during carnival-like celebrations, and Herrin 2013, 124. Garland 2006, 171-3, notes that female carnivalesque dancing continued despite prohibitions, as they were mentioned and renewed in the 12th century.

931 *Trullo*, 3, (691/2).

most of them musicians and dancers.[932] Of these, nine refer to images portraying such woman. They are not anonymous figures, but images of famed female artists. One depicts the famous singer and lyre player Maria, who originated from Alexandria. Others are of the lyre player Anthusa, dancers Rhodoclea, Helladia and Libania, and actresses Calliope and Polymnia.[933] These poems on the images[934] of performing artists could be compared with a poem by Agathias that mentions how boys may "stroll in the streets and let their eyes wander from one picture to another".[935] The poem does not state what kind of images they are, but the Greek words used (γραφίδων χρώμασι) seem to indicate paintings rather than statues, reliefs or mosaics. It is not far-fetched to consider a connection between the pictures mentioned by Agathias and the images of female artists described in other poems in his collection, implying that such pictures were displayed in public. At least one of the poems indicates display in a public place:

> On another Picture of a Dancing Girl in the Sosthenion
>
> I am Helladia of Byzantium, and here I stand
> where the people in spring celebrate the dance,
> here where the land is divided by the strait;
> for both continents praised my dancing. [936]

Were these images displayed as a tribute to the fame and art of female artists? Alternatively, could they be seen as a type of advertisement, put up to promote the artist? Their precise social function cannot be deduced from the material and the explanations may vary, but it is clear that both the images and the female artists they depicted were part of public cultural life in the capital and other large cities.

The poems are not restricted to describing paintings of performers. One is about a portrait created by a certain Thomas, who was in love with the woman in question, a famous harlot in Constantinople named Callirhoe.[937] The poem on the image of Maria, a famous lyre player from Alexandria, describes how she makes both the lyre and the hearts of men beat.[938] Interestingly enough, there is no indication of any disdain or infamous reputation connected to these female performers. The poems praise their art and their fame, as well as their beauty, and none give any

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[932] *Anth. Gr.*, V:222, 271, VII:597, 598, 612, XVI:218, 219, 277, 278, 283-288 (6th century).

[933] *Anth. Gr.*, XVI:218, 219, 277, 278, 283-286, 288. Cf. Coptic textile with female dancer from the 7th century, Rutschowscaya 1990, 111.

[934] The εἰς εἰκόνα in the headings means either statue or painting, see Cameron & Cameron 1966, 14. But, at least one, *Anth. Gr.*, XVI:277, clearly refers to a painting.

[935] *Anth. Gr.*, V:297 (by Agathias Scholasticus, 6th century), quoted above, Chapter II.A, 60. Cf. *Trullo*, 100, which prohibits pictures that could arouse lust. Herrin 1992, 103. See Cormack 1985, 49, on the active role of images in Byzantine society.

[936] *Anth. Gr.*, XVI:284 (by Leontius Scholasticus, 6th century) (translated by W.R. Patton, 1948-60).

[937] *Anth. Gr.*, XVI:80 (by Agathias Scholasticus, 6th century). See also, Leontsini 1989, 36. Cameron & Cameron 1967, note that Thomas is not necessarily the painter, but can also be the one who commissioned the portrait.

[938] *Anth. Gr.*, XVI:278 (by Paulos Silentiarios, 6th century).

hint that the women were socially slighted or had a morally dubious reputation. One poem even stresses the contrary, that the body of the female artist was not stained and that her favours were not to be bought for money. It is entitled "On the Gilded Picture of a Female Lyrist":

> No one put gold on Anthusa,
> but the son of Cronos poured himself on her, as once on Danae.
> But he did not come near her body,
> for his mind was seized with shame,
> lest against his will he should consort with one of the Muses.[939]

Despite the tradition of associating publicly performing female artists with women of ill repute, on one level of the cultural society of 6th-century Constantinople they were not looked upon with disdain but were appreciated and celebrated for their art. The poems reflect a secular culture in which the adoration of female artists was acceptable.[940] As performers these women belonged to the world of entertainment in which audiences focussed on the appreciative aspects, whereas other segments of society looked with a more disdainful gaze, voicing objections and moral scorn.[941]

Other sources support the notion of nuances in attitudes, and that an educated audience could distinguish between talented female artists and prostitutes. Two funerary epigrams the prefect Julianus of Egypt dedicated to a female singer named Calliope support this notion. The poems describe her voice as remaining strong and beautiful also in her old age. It is clear that it was specifically for her art she was revered and appreciated.[942] A similar deduction can be made from Procopius' remarks about Empress Theodora's former life in his *Anecdota*. Intent on smearing her reputation, he claims that she was not much more than a simple prostitute, as she did not even play music on the flute or dance, but earned her living simply by displaying her body.[943] This comment reveals the difference in public consciousness between women performing as artists on the one hand (although sexual attraction might be connected with their person) and those, on the other hand, who earned their living solely by flaunting and using their bodies in one way or another.[944] Although

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[939] *Anth. Gr.*, XVI:285 (by Leontius Scholasticus, 6th century) (translated by W.R. Patton, 1948-60).

[940] Cf. Roueché 1993, 55, on male performers in Late Antiquity who could achieve a high social status and receive honours.

[941] Cf. *Trullo,* 3, see above 153, & *Pratum Spirituale*, chapter 207, on a girl fallen into a destitute life of prostitution and in her hour of need is met with contempt and rejection from her neighbours. The story takes place during the life of Patriarch Paul, elected in AD 536, although the text was written in the early 7th century. See Chapter III.A, 112 n. 637.

[942] *Anth. Gr.*, VII:597-8 (by Julianus, 6th century).

[943] Procopius, *Anecd.* 9.11-12. Cf. Leontsini 1989, 27, Webb 1997, 128. See also Procopius *Anecd.*, 12.28-30, about a female performer in circles of power: Macedonia, a dancer for the Blue faction in Antioch, is working as a spy for Justinian, who at the time is still just handling the administration under Justin I. Cf. Foss 2002, 168.

[944] Cf. Vesterinen 2007, 124-7, on the association of prostitution with female performers from Antiquity, and also on the difference between prostitutes using dance in plying their trade and professional performers. There are also a few references in the sources to other women exhibiting their skills or themselves. E.g. *Symeon Iun.,* 209, mentions a female ventriloquist in the context of attempted medical and magical treatments of the mentally ill Emperor Justin II. Cf. Garland 1999, 51. Theophanes, *Chron*, 6017 [AD 524/5] and Malalas, *Chron*. 17.7 [412], mention a woman of giant stature living during the reign of Justin I, who earned her living by travelling around the cities of Cilicia begging

some sources distinguish between these categories of women, the line was elusive and the association remained. It was accentuated in moral and religious texts such as hagiographies, and is also articulated in Justinian's law codex.[945] There is continuous ambivalence regarding women in artistic professions and the line between approval and reproach must have been thin.[946] The balance could easily waver between celebrity that provided certain social acceptance and disdain.

The poems about female performers can be compared with an illustration in the *Wiener Genesis* manuscript. One panel has a scene representing the pharaoh's banquet. In the centre are two female musicians, one playing a sort of flute and the other a percussion instrument.[947] This image echoes a setting that was probably not unfamiliar to people enjoying a fine feast in the 6th century.

Despite the availability of female performers, male performers also assumed female roles, as in the Classic tradition. One poem by Palladas of Alexandria written in the 3rd or 4th century ironically criticises a male dancer performing female roles.

> Snub-nosed Memphis
> danced the parts of Daphne and Niobe,
> Daphne as if he were wooden,
> and Niobe as if he were of stone.[948]

How, then, did male performers doing female parts and female dancers differ? This cannot only be a chronological matter, in that another poem, probably from the 4th century and written by Claudianus, tells of an old female dancer who has lost all her charm.[949]

Both female dancers and male dancers performing female roles existed in late Antiquity, the difference being in the type of entertainment offered. Male performers presented the roles of pantomimes, often with mythological themes, whereas female performers were connected with the lighter themes of mime, often with sensual connotations.[950] This is reflected in a carving in the lower part of an ivory diptych depicting some male tragedy actors on the right-hand side and some comic mime actors, including a female actress, on the left-hand side.[951] There was a distinction between pantomime performances, which still attracted and required an educated audience on account of the themes, and mime performances that developed in the direction of what could be likened to

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for money, receiving one *follis* from each shopkeeper. Cf. Messis 2006, 378.

[945] E.g. *Dig.* 3.2.1, *Just*. 1.4.14, *Nov.* 51 pr. Juridically, female performers were often bundled with prostitutes, and female inn keepers and occasionally public merchants could be bunched with female performers on account of the public nature of their professions, e.g. *Just.* 5.5.7 & *Just.* 5.27.1. See Leontsini 1989, 27-8, 122-125, 189-90, Beaucamp 1990, 129-132, 204-209, 284-288, Foss 2002, 167, Webb 2002, 293, 298, and above Chapter IV.A, 148.

[946] Male actors could also be perceived as living reprehensible lives. E.g. *Pratum Spirituale*, chapter 32, tells of an actor named Babylas living in Tarsos, who led a disorderly life and cohabited with two concubines (Cometa and Nicosa), before repenting and taking the monastic habit, the women following his example.

[947] *Cod.Vindob.Theol.Graec. 31*, fol. 17 v. (early 6th century). See Fig. 2a.

[948] *Anth. Gr.*, XI:255 (translated by W.R. Patton, 1948-60).

[949] *Anth. Gr.*, IX:139.

[950] Vesterinen 2007, 56-63, 66-72.

[951] Ivory diptych with both images of Consul Anastasius intact, from Constantinople AD 517 (*Paris. Bibl. Nat.*), see Volbach 1976, 36-7, No. 21, Taf. 9, and Neiiendam 1992, 109, 120-1, and figures 35 & 42. Cf. Roueché 1993, 25.

burlesque variety theatre, in which women also performed and that were targeted at the broader masses.[952] Magoulias distinguishes between *thymelicae*, who played musical instruments, danced, sang songs and also performed at weddings, and *mimes*, who were male or female performers of satirical character sketches on stage.[953] One poem reveals that female performers also acted out certain roles, describing how the dancer Helladia depicted the goddess of war to a new tune about Hector.[954] Two other poems praising Helladia's art give no suggestion of impropriety: on the contrary, they celebrate her as a greater artist and a better dancer than young men, and refer to a picture of her put up in a place where "people in spring celebrate the dance".[955] A comparison can be made with an ivory comb from the 5th or early 6th century on which there is an image of a female performer with a wreath in her hand and an inscription praising the victorious Helladia and the Blue circus faction.[956] Regardless of the tradition connecting them with prostitutes, female public performers, at least in 6th-century Constantinople, are praised in poems for their art without such connotations being emphasised.[957] Another poem in celebration of a lyre player called Maria of Alexandria shows that women performers originated from different parts of the empire.[958]

Theatres and various types of show houses could be used for performances, but according to Walter Puchner, whereas sources provide evidence of four theatres in Constantinople during the 5th century, none are mentioned in connection with the 6th century. There was a change in the world of the performing arts from Hellenistic times to Late Antiquity, when traditional theatre made way for a range of improvisational forms of entertainment involving travelling companies and solo actors. There is also a decline in the number of documented performers.[959] On the other hand, the proportion of female artists mentioned in sources increase from the 4th to the 6th centuries, easily giving the impression that female performers were in the majority in the 6th century.[960] The Hippodrome was used to stage other acts as well as horseraces, as evidenced in Procopius' tale of Theodora's upbringing, for example, as well as in a 6th-century papyrus showing a circus programme listing six races mixed in with other events involving entertainers such as singing rope-dancers, mimes and groups of athletes.[961] Female artists could also be engaged to perform in private houses and at private parties.[962] Leontsini mentions several Church Fathers showing displeasure about nuptials being used

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952 Leontsini 1989, 123-4, Roueché 1993,15, 26-9, Webb 1997, 121. Cf. also Webb 2002, 286-8.

953 Magoulias 1971, 246-8.

954 *Anth. Gr.*, XVI:287 (by Leontius Scholasticus, 6th century).

955 *Anth. Gr.*, XVI:284, 286 (by Leontius Scholasticus, 6th century). The former is quoted above, 154.

956 Vesterinen 2007, 63 & fig. 20. The comb is in the *Musée du Louvre* (Louvre E 11872, E25353).

957 Cf. Webb 2002, 283, 300, Neiiendam 1992, 101, and Magoulias 1971, 250-2, on the 6th-century apologia by Choricius of Gaza on behalf on the (male) mimes, who also suffered accusations of licentious living (*Apologia Mimorum*, Choricii Gazaei Opera, ed. R. Foerster & E. Richsteig, Leipzig 1929).

958 *Anth. Gr.*, XVI:278 (by Paulos Silentiarios, 6th century).

959 Puchner 2002, 306, 309, 312-3, 316.

960 Webb 2002, 282. Cf. also Vesterinen 2007, 62-3.

961 Procopius, *Anecd.* 9.11-12. *P. Oxy.* 2707, Rouechè 1993, 58. Cf. also a female performer associated with the circus faction of the Blues, Vesterinen 2007, 63 & fig. 20, see 156 and note 956.

962 Cf. Neiiendam 1992, 100-5, and Rouché 1993, 1-2, 28.

as a pretext for inviting mimic performers to provide the entertainment.[963] Theodoros of Stoudios recalled in a funeral oration how his pious mother refrained from watching theatrical performances at weddings.[964] The above-mentioned illustration in the *Wiener Genesis* is evidence that female musicians were employed at private banquets.[965] Ruth Webb mentions a *topos*, found in 6th-century literature, of the humble female performer who comes to mix with the powerful through her art.[966] Cyril Mango notes that the word 'theatre' in early-Byzantine vocabulary often designated any kind of spectacle and referred to the performance rather than the place in which it was given.[967] There must have been wide variety in performances, and relatively heterogenous social acceptance between them.

Female performing artists such as dancers and musicians are discussed here in more detail given the public nature of their profession and the relatively ample evidence in the material. There is much less evidence of female cultural and artistic production in other creative professions. There are some traces of women as creators of literary products, but scant mention of them as artisans or artists. Talbot mentions a woman in 7th-century Syria who gave drawing lessons, but observes that female artistic activity otherwise seemed limited to the production of fine textiles and embroidery.[968] Given the major role of cloth production and textile work in what were considered women's tasks, such activity might have been extensive and spread beyond the domestic sphere, but unfortunately such production is both anonymous and vulnerable to deterioration.[969]

There is some evidence of female literary production, although not much from the period discussed here. The most well-known example from later periods is the 12th-century *Alexiad* by the princess Anna Comnena.[970] There was a cluster of female hymnographers in the 9th century, the most famous being Kassia: after failing to be selected as the bride of Emperor Theophilus she founded a monastery in Constantinople and died as its abbess in 865.[971] The *Life of St. Matrona of Perge* mentions another monastic writer, claiming in the last chapter that the *vita* was originally put into writing by a nun in Matrona's convent, the blessed Eulogia.[972] Shredded evidence of female literary production is to be found in the *Kyklos* compiled by Agathias. He hints in a funerary poem for his sister Eugenia that she had engaged herself in some sort of literary activity.[973] One poem in

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963 Leontsini 1989, 122-129. Cf. Neiiendam 1992, 103-4.

964 Theod. Stoud, *Laudatio*, §3 (written around the year 800).

965 *Cod.Vindob.Theol.Graec. 31*, fol. 17 v. (early 6th century). See 155 & Fig. 2a. Cf. Choricius of Gaza (6th century), who recalls that a mime performance (probably all male) usually followed the banquet in the imperial palace as part of the New Year's festivities, Magoulias 1971, 251 [citing *Apologia* 357 (58), see note 957 above].

966 Webb 1997, 121, e.g. Aristaneitos' fictional letters, but also Procopius' portrayal of Theodora.

967 Mango 1981b, 342. Cf. Leontsini 1989, 125, and Neiiendam 1992, 107-8, 110-22.

968 Talbot 1997, 135. Cf. *P. Aberd.* 59, on young female apprentice learning embroidery. Beaucamp 1992, 159 n. 5. See Chapter IV.A, 146.

969 Cf. Coptic textiles with woven or embroidered decorations. Rutschowscaya 1990, *passim,* and Thomas 2007, *passim.*

970 E.g. Connor 2004, 238.

971 Topping 1982/3, *passim*, Connor 2004, 161, Garland 1999, 96-98, Talbot 1997, 136, Kazhdan & Talbot 1991/1992, 400-1.

972 *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 50 (written in the early 6th century)

973 *Anth. Gr*., VII:593 (by Agathias Scholsticos, 6th century). For the poem see Chapter II.B, 71.

his anthology was written by a female, Theosebeia. It is a funerary epigram for the doctor Ablabius.[974] Although texts by female writers could be publicised in larger circles, these women were not artists performing in public, as actresses, dancers and musicians were. Women in the educated and intellectual classes were interested in literary output, and it was an acceptable occupation requiring some learning but not public appearances, which were unsuitable for women of higher social standing. Connor suggests that the long poem in the church of St. Polyeuctos, as well as other surviving shorter epigrams, could actually have been written by Anicia Juliana, who provided the funds for the building and restoration activities they mention.[975]

C. Prostitution

Stavroula Leontsini's dissertation *Die Prostitution im frühen Byzanz*, published in 1989, gives a good overview of the trade. She concentrates on the social and practical sides of the profession, discussing name practices, lifespan, financial points, and juridical and social aspects. The most interesting parts in the present context concern the places used for prostitution, the behaviour of prostitutes in public and their situation in relation to the surrounding society.[976]

Prostitution flourished, as Leontsini notes, where opportunities for such trade abounded, primarily large cities, especially ports, in which people conglomerated and many passed through. Other similar places included cities at crossroads and pilgrimage destinations. The imperial capital featured most of the conditions under which prostitution proliferated. Sources confirm that it was common in Constantinople. It also thrived in other cities such as Alexandria, Antioch, Corinth and Thessaloniki. Leontsini lists smaller places with typical features (being a port, at a crossroads or near a pilgrimage centre) such as Assos and Sykeon (near Ankyra), both in Asia Minor, Edessa east of Euphrates, Emesa in Syria, as well as Aigaia and Tarsos in Cilice. Cities such as Jerusalem and Jericho are also mentioned.[977]

There were brothels in the cities, but taverns and inns also could function as work places for prostitutes.[978] Other places with a dubious reputation for undercover prostitution included baths and

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[974] *Anth. Gr*., VII:559 (by Theosebeia, 6th century).

[975] *Anth. Gr.* I:10, I:12-7. Connor 1999, 508, 515-6, 522. Cf. *Cod.Vindob.Med.Gr. 1, fol. 6 v*.

[976] According to Leontsini 1989, 194-5, prostitution and work as performers were the only 'public activities' open to women (apart from opportunities inside the imperial court), who otherwise were closed off from public life. It is a matter of definition, but her view seems slightly limited in that she ignores other work outside the domestic sphere with less stigma attached but still taking women into the public sphere: such bath attendants, vendors and midwives, as discussed above. There was also charity work. Nevertheless, her survey on prostitution is very thorough.

[977] Leontsini 1989, 63-72. Sources mentioning harlots or brothels, e.g. Moschos, *Prat.Spir.*, chapters 14 (Jericho), 31 (Aigaia), 97 (Jerusalem ?), 207 (Alexandria). *The life of St. John the Almsgiver*, chapter 36, describes the efforts of Bitalius to convert the prostitutes in Alexandria, and chapter 43 tells of a repentant harlot from Tyre becoming a nun. Theodore was born in Sykeon, in an inn kept by his female family members, who are said to have been courtesans, *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapters 3, 5, and in chapter 42 silver vessels purchased in Constantinople turn out to have been made from a prostitute's former chamber-pot.

[978] Cf. e.g. Moschos, *Prat.Spir.*, chapter 14, 31, 97.

similar institutions.[979] Some prostitutes worked from their dwellings.[980] According to some sources, prostitution was rife in areas near city walls in particular, the fringes of the cities being where prostitutes and brothels were located, but at least in Constantinople they extended almost to the city centre.[981] Certain streets were known as places in which to pick up customers.[982]

Leontsini distinguishes between voluntary and involuntary prostitution, in other words between women who choose this way of life and those who, for various reasons are forced into it.[983] Even in the case of 'voluntary' prostitution, however, the conditions were such that not many other options were open, and the choice was, in one sense, forced by circumstances. Social background and financial considerations were major determining factors. Poverty was a recurring reason and a woman without family or a guardian might be driven to adopting such solutions.[984] Hagiographies also mention pure lust as a reason for a woman to prostitute herself, but these texts have educational and moralising aims and thus have reason to highlight such motives as opposed to social factors.[985] In terms of social background, prostitutes included women who were pagans, of low social status, former slaves or foreigners ('barbarians'), or who belonged to the social sphere of entertainment or to that of taverns and inns.[986] The case of St. Theodore's female relatives hints at certain hereditary traits from mother to daughter regarding prostitution.[987] The majority of prostitutes probably lived in meagre circumstances, but there were courtesans who managed to accumulate more extensive wealth, having clients from the higher social strata.[988] The *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon* describes an incident involving vessels made from a silver chamber-pot formerly owned by a prostitute, implying some wealth on her part.[989] The line between courtesan and mistress may not always have been clear: the latter could originate from relatively high circles. Emperor Phocas is said to have had a mistress named Callinike who was the daughter of one of the higher officials in Constantinople in

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[979] See Beaucamp 1990, 122. Cf. Moschos, *Prat.Spir.*, chapter 186, on a woman desperate to buy bread for her imprisoned husband trying to sell herself in the evening near the entrance of a bath, where she is picked up.

[980] Cf. e.g. Moschos, *Prat.Spir.*, chapter 207, on a girl in Alexandria having fallen into poverty.

[981] Leontsini 1989, 64-5.

[982] Cf. again Moschos, *Prat.Spir.*, chapter 186.

[983] Leontsini 1989, 74, see also 175-6.

[984] Leontsini 1989, 75. Herrin 1984, 170-1. Cf. Moschos, *Prat.Spir.*, chapter 136, 186: the need for food drives women to contemplate offering sexual services; and chapter 207: a young orphaned woman without a guardian falls into prostitution. *Nov.* 14 pr. (AD 535), on men luring young girls into the city with promises of possessions. Procopius, *Aedif.* 1.9.1-10, Malalas, *Chron.* 18.24 [440-1]: Theodora attempts to release prostitutes and recognises that poverty could keep them in the profession, so she not only provides a monastery as refuge but also gives each former prostitute clothes and one gold *nomismata*. Cf. Foss 2002, 150.

[985] Cf. e.g. *Life of St. Mary of Egypt*, chapter 18, in which Mary claims she never accepted money in exchange for her sexual favours but lived a debauched life out of pure lust. See also, Chapter IV.A, 145.

[986] Cf. e.g. Moschos, *Prat.Spir.*, chapter 207: a destitute girl turned prostitute wants to be baptised; and chapter 136: a poor Christian Saracen woman tries to trade her body for food. See Procopius, *Anecd.* 9.1-14, on Empress Theodora and her sister. Garland 1999, 13-15, and Foss 2002, 141-3, 154-5. *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 3: female members of his family keep an inn and are said to work there as courtesans.

[987] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 3, both Theodore's grandmother and her two daughters are presented as courtesans. Cf. Leontsini 1989, 120. Beaucamp 1990, 130, mentions the hereditary nature of the acting profession, which is implied in some earlier law texts (e.g. *Codex Theodosianus*, 15.7.4).

[988] See Leontsini 1989, 162-8, for a discussion on earnings and differences in status among prostitutes.

[989] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 42.

the early 7th century.[990]

According to Leontsini, involuntary prostitution might have been inflicted by parents, family or even the state selling a person into prostitution in her youth or been inflicted as a punishment.[991] Justinian legislation purported to protect women from forced prostitution and imposed harsh punishments for procuration and pimping.[992] Imprisoned women were vulnerable to sexual abuse and enforced harlotry, which might lead into prostitution.[993] This was one reason why Justinian legislation aimed to prevent women being kept in ordinary prisons, stipulating instead that they should be held and guarded separately, in convents, for example.[994] Leontsini mentions merchants and travellers, soldiers and even pilgrims as typical customers of prostitutes.[995]

Widespread prostitution is well attested, at least in Constantinople. A *Novella* from 535, aimed at prohibiting pimping, gives a vivid description of men travelling to the countryside to lure young girls into the city with promises of shoes, clothes and other things, but then keeping them in houses in poor conditions - a regrettable resemblance to modern trafficking.[996] Both Procopius and John Malalas mention attempts by Emperor Justinian and Empress Theodora to come to grips with the problem, trying at least to prevent the misuse of prostituted women by pimps, as well as facilitating retirement by establishing a monastery in the vicinity of the capital as a place of withdrawal for former harlots.[997] The main aim of the law code was to prevent pimping: prostitution in itself was not forbidden, even if it branded a woman as infamous and put many juridical restrictions on her.[998] Ecclesiastical authorities also condemned pimping, and such activities were punishable by excommunication.[999]

Leontsini considers that the external appearance of prostitutes was often more provocative in terms of both behaviour and garments than that of others, and that their behaviour could be suggestively vulgar in a way that was totally improper for other women. They might wear luxurious clothing and jewellery that were above their social status, flaunt themselves without a head covering thereby showing off their beautiful hair, and make generous use of cosmetics. The aim was to allure customers, but at the same time the infamy that already labelled them gave liberty to be vulgar:

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990 *John of Antioch,* IV.662. Stratos 1968, 79.

991 Leontsini 1989, 78-81.

992 *Just*. 1.4.14, 11.41.7 and 11.40.6, *Nov.* 14 (AD s535), *Nov*. 35 (AD 535), *Nov.* 51 (AD 537). Even prostituting slaves was forbidden, *Just*. 6.4.4 (2), and 7.6.1 (4). Beaucamp 1990, 121-129. Cf. Foss 2002, 150.

993 Leontsini 1989, 84. Not a female prisoner, but cf. *Prat. Spir*., chapter 189: a wife visiting her jailed husband is offered his freedom if she gives herself to a person of rank who is also on a visit there.

994 *Nov.* 134. chapter 9 (AD 556). Beaucamp 1990, 137.

995 Leontsini 1989, 70-1. Cf. the soldier and the innkeeper's daughter in the *Life of St. Mary / Marinos*, chapter 9. Theodore's father was a former Hippodrome artist and an imperial emissary staying at the inn, *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 3. Mary renders services to gain passage on a ship carrying pilgrims to Jerusalem, *Life of St. Mary of Egypt*, chapter 19 - 22. Cf. Talbot 2002, 78, with stories in the *Miracles of St. Thekla* (5th century).

996 *Nov*. 14. pr (AD 535). See also Leontsini 1989, 177-8, Beaucamp 1990, 128, and Foss 2002, 150.

997 Procopius, *Aedif.*, 1.9.1-10 & *Anecd.*, 17.5-6. Malalas, *Chron*. 18.24 [440-1]. See also above note 984. Cf. Leontsini 1989, 135, 151-2., 162, 177-9, Beaucamp 1992, 338-9, Garland 1999, 17, and Foss 2002, 150, 162. In contrast, cf. *Just*. 1.4.5, which prohibits former actresses and the like from being ordained virgins of God.

998 Leontsini 1989, 177-8, and Beaucamp 1990, 122-8. Cf. Foss 2002, 150. See also Chapter II.E, 93.

999 E.g. *Trullo*, 86 (691/2). Cf. Leontsini 1989, 182-3.

improper behaviour or display could hardly damage their reputation further.[1000]

Although prostitutes might be visible in public space, Leontsini reflects on their social isolation, excluded from normal society because of their disrepute.[1001] The story in *Pratum Spirituale* about a destitute former rich girl turned prostitute attests to such attitudes. The girl's neighbours despised her and refused to help her or to have anything to do with her. In vain she asked someone to speak on her behalf when she became ill and, repenting of her way of life, expressed the wish to become a Christian and to be baptised.[1002] Prostitutes were not totally isolated, however, and attitudes must have been both varied and ambivalent. An epigram advertising the benefits of a public bathhouse is addressed to wives, unmarried girls and prostitutes alike:

> Such women as have desire to please (and ye all have) come here,
> and ye shall win brighter charms.
> She who has a husband will give her husband pleasure,
> and the unmarried girl will stir many to offer her marriage.
> And she who makes her living by her body, if she bathe here,
> will have swarms of lovers at her door.[1003]

There is playfulness in the poem, but it implies that a bath house might have both respectable women and prostitutes among its clientele, resulting in some mingling in the common space. The social interaction might have included frowning and expressions of contempt, but on a practical level the keepers of the baths (or whoever commissioned or wrote the epigram) did not differentiate or make moral judgements about the prospective paying clientele.

Despite ill fame connected to prostitution and similar professions, inherent in the Byzantine culture was the possibility of rehabilitation and of changing one's life. One option was to make a complete turnaround and to lead a religious life. Several hagiographies tell of reformed prostitutes turned ascetics, but these were meant as edifying reading and this alternative may not have been that common.[1004] Entering a convent was nevertheless one way for a former prostitute to ensure security in old age.[1005] It was specifically at the age when beauty and youth, elements that matter in a trade that is dependent on external looks, had faded that prostitutes might have to search for an alternative livelihood. According to Leontsini, the options available to old prostitutes in antiquity included

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[1000] Leontsini 1989, 88-97. Cf. Constantinou 2005, 69,72, 81, on the story of Pelagia, an actress (and therefore paralleled with a prostitute) from Antioch (5th century), where she is described as appearing in the street spectacularly dressed, smelling of sweet perfume, and with her face and head uncovered.

[1001] Leontsini 1989, 191.

[1002] Moschos, *Prat.Spir.*, chapter 207.

[1003] *Anth. Gr.* IX:621 (anonymous epigram) (translated by W.R. Patton, 1948-60). The author and date of the poem are unknown, but it appears among a sequence of poems from Agathias' *Kyklos.*

[1004] The *Life of St. Mary of Egypt* is one of the more famous.

[1005] Theodore's grandmother retired to a convent, for example, *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapters 25 & 32. Not all aspired to this, however, if Procopius is to be believed, *Anecd.*, 17.5-6, claiming that some prostitutes interned in the convent established by Theodora attempted to escape. Cf. Garland 1999, 17, and Foss 2002, 162.

selling love trinkets to lovers and cosmetics to other prostitutes, or becoming wet nurses.[1006] There may even have been the possibility of a respectable marriage for women with a reputation for harlotry who had left the profession. Theodora's elevation from a performer in the Hippodrome to Empress, of course, was an exceptional case. A more dubious claim was that she later arranged an advantageous marriage for the daughter of one of her friends of old, a dancer and prostitute called Chrysomallo, although the marriage had to be forced on a rather unwilling husband.[1007] There are other examples, however. Theodore's mother is described as eventually marrying a respectable man, a leading citizen in the nearby city of Ancyra.[1008] Beaucamp points out that the law took into consideration the possibility that a man might marry a former prostitute.[1009] Putting an infamous reputation behind them was hardly effortless in a society that easily condemned women for anything that was considered too public, but it was possible. Prostitutes could leave behind their previous life and find a more decent profession, get married or embark on a religious life.[1010] In this way they could 're-enter respectable society'.

As discussed earlier, female sexuality tended to be looked at with scepticism and mistrust. From the Church's point of view the only acceptable sex partner, at least for a woman, was her husband. Extra-marital sex was not looked upon gently regarding men, either. On a secular level, prostitution was factual and even found its way into cultural outlets such as poems, some of which are mentioned above.[1011] A poem hinting at these two alternative options for sexual relations is another playful advertisement for a bathhouse:

> If sweet desire for thy wedded wife possess thee, bath here,
> and thou shalt appear to her brighter.
> Or if lust drive thee to mercenary and depraved women, bath here,
> and thou shalt be paid instead of paying.[1012]

In reality, wives and prostitutes were not the only potential sexual partners for men. This is implied, for example, in a poem written by Agathias that asks, "By what road shall one go to the Land of Love?". He lists different types of women, commenting on the complications each liaison might bring.[1013] Other poems and references as well allude to amorous contact and even sexual relations with women belonging to female groups other than wives and prostitutes. This is discussed in

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[1006] Leontsini 1989, 138.

[1007] Procopius, *Anecd.* 17.33-36.

[1008] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 25. Leontsini 1989, 141-6, discusses at length the issues of former prostitutes finding restitution and entering into marriage. Cf. Beaucamp 1992, 315, Connor 2004, 152, Herrin 1984, 170-1, Foss 2002, 158.

[1009] Beaucamp 1990, 150. Cf. laws giving actresses the possibility to leave the stage and afterwards to marry, *Just.* 1.4.33, *Just.* 5.4.23, *Nov.* 51 (AD 537) and 117.6 (AD 542). Foss 2002, 150.

[1010] Theodore's mother married and his grandmother entered a convent: both were former innkeepers associated with harlotry, *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 25. Also, Leontsini 1989, 149.

[1011] E.g. a poem about a picture of a harlot in Constantinople, *Anth. Gr.* XVI:80 (by Agathias, 6th century). See 155.

[1012] *Anth. Gr.* IX:622 (translated by W.R. Patton, 1948-60).

[1013] *Anth. Gr.* V:302. The poem is quoted in full in Chapter II.E, 94-5.

Chapter VII in the context of social intermingling.

D. Wealth, deprivation and the upkeep of the family

Both wealth and deprivation affected women's presence in public space, as did the need to ensure the upkeep of family members. As Laiou remarked, writing in the early 1980s: "with regard to the economic activities of women, it may again be found that class, rather than gender, had the strongest impact; but the relative weight of each factor has yet to be assessed, and it will undoubtedly be seen that, here as elsewhere, there were significant changes over time."[1014] To evaluate the situation, therefore, it is necessary to consider all the factors (gender, class, civic status and temporal changes), each of which affected how women participated financially in society.

Women were able to accumulate, be in charge of and dispose of wealth. As daughters had equal rights to inherit and had the ultimate ownership of their dowry family fortune came also into female possession. Women could use their wealth for trade, patronage and charitable purposes.[1015] According to Despina White, from the Justinian Code onwards women gained greater possibilities to manage their own property.[1016] Talbot, in turn, points out that widows often were the ones best positioned to control their own wealth and to dispose of it, thereby possibly having the most financial freedom.[1017] Nevertheless, the story of the wealthy Athanasia shows that married women were also in control of their own property.[1018] As Herrin remarks, women in Byzantium, as in the Medieval world in general, played an important role in both the build-up and disposal of family fortune.[1019]

Women as vendors and in other professions are discussed above. There is a reason behind Laiou's comment that "the non-aristocratic urban women, too, seem to have had a complex role in society, far removed from the simple model which Byzantine ideology had created."[1020] White further notes that "women through legislation enjoyed several privileges regarding personal property and often had tremendous financial power."[1021] Some observations on women's wealth and their use of it are therefore called for.

[1014] Laiou 1982, 202-3.

[1015] Talbot 1997, 119, Talbot 1994, 106, Herrin 1984, 178-9 and Arjava 1996, 63, 70, 75, 134, 142, 149. Beucamp, 1990, 12, 15 n. 39, 70-7, 136, discusses at length the legal protection of female property, especially the dowry, and a woman's possibilities to be in charge of it. Garland 1999, 16, discusses how Justinian legislation in particular gave protection to women and their property. *The Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 33, shows how the dowry belonged to a woman and her heirs. Theodore was entitled to inherit his mother's dowry (not her husband's family), as she had no children from her legal marriage: it went to any heir of the wife, even an illegitimate son.

[1016] White 1982, 539, 541-6.

[1017] Talbot 1997, 128-9. Cf. Arjava 1996, 132, 248-9. Given the age differences often occurring between spouses, widows may have comprised a significant proportion of the female population. Cf. Talbot 1997, 129, on studies in Late Byzantine rural settings with large proportions of widows. Cf. Laiou 1981, 247, positing that, with regard to the 11th-15th centuries, widows probably comprised about 20 per cent of the population at any given time. Cf. the discussion on widows in Chapter II.E.

[1018] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 39, 42-4.

[1019] Herrin 1984, 177.

[1020] Laiou 1981, 252.

[1021] White 1982, 539.

Most women had hardly any large wealth to dispose of, but some did and could independently make decisions about its use.[1022] A daughter who was still a minor and under tutelage was dependent on her parents' or tutor's approval concerning financial decisions.[1023] Beaucamp considers in her study on the legal position of women that wives might also have been under certain tutelage of their husbands and to some degree dependent on their co-decisions. On the other hand, she also refers to an abundance of documents presenting women as trading without a tutor/husband, which a legal formula in them explicitly states. Beaucamp found that papyri stating an exemption from tutelage were more common in the material than documents involving women in financial transactions with some sort of tutor mentioned.[1024] Nine of the papyri, dating from the 6th and 7th centuries, concern women conducting transactions (e.g. selling a house or part of a stock of grain) that required some form of consent from a third party. The need for consent in these cases apparently relates to family relations and the fact that the persons concerned had a shared interest in the property or the transaction: it was not that the women in question were unable to sign a contract in their own right.[1025] Some papyri present women as vendors and able to use the income for their chosen family purposes.[1026] A papyrus related to Aphrodito records a female landholder, the daughter of Flavius Ioannes, leasing land situated north of a monastery to Aurelius Ioannes, the son of Hermeias and Rachel.[1027]

Turning to hagiography, one *vita* portrays the young Athanasia as being in control of her own wealth, to the extent that her less fortunate husband sees it fit to attempt to steal money from her through the intermediary of a servant. It is also implied that she oversees the management of her country estate and makes the decision to free and bequeathe property to her slaves when she enters

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[1022] Cf. an ironic poem composed by Palladas of Alexandria from the 3rd / 4th century about a woman spending her fortune as she wishes, leaving nothing to her heirs, *Anth.Gr*. VII:607.

[1023] See the above discussion on legal ages for financial responsibility, Chapter II.E, 87-8, and e.g. *Dig*.5.3.13 (1), *Just.* 2.4.2 (1). Cf. Beaucamp 1990, 15, 136.

[1024] Beaucamp 1992, 197-212. Papyri from the 6th-7th centuries mentioning an exemption include: *SB* XVI 12864 (from Hermoupolist, AD 506), *P.Flor.* III 323 (from Hermoupolist, AD 525), *Stud. Pal*. XX 139 (from Arsinoë, AD 531), *P. Grenf.* II 85 (from Arsinoë, AD 536), *P. Coll, Youtie* II 92 [*P. Cair. Masp*. I 67023] (from Antinoupolis, AD 569), *P. Cair. Masp*. II 67156 (from Antinoupolis, AD 570), *P. Monac*. I 9 (from Syene, AD 585), *SB* I 5271 (from Arsinoë, AD 615, somewhat uncertain), all with a formula along the lines of χωρὶς (τοῦ) κυρίου (αὐτῆς/ἑαυτῆς) ἀνδρὸς χρηματίζουσα. *P. Lond*. V 1731 (from Syene, AD 585), *P. Monac*. I 11 (from Syene, AD 585), *BGU* I 317 (from Arsinoë, AD 580/581, belonging to this or the previous type), all with a formula along the lines of ἄνευ κυρίου αὐτῆς ἀνδρὸς χρηματίζουσα. *Stud. Pal*. III 83 (from Arsinoë, 6th or 7th century) and *PS* VII 77 (AD 611), both with a formula along the lines of ἄνευ ἀνδρὸς χρηματίζουσα.

[1025] Beaucamp 1992, 247-250. The papyri are: *P. Prag*. I 42 (from Hermoupolis, early 6th century, type of contract not identified), *P. Vat. Aphrod*. 14 (from Aphrodito, AD 524, type of contract not identified), *P. Cair. Masp*. III 67311 (from Antinooupolis, AD 569-570, act on divorce), *P. Lond*. V 1717 (from Antinooupolis ?, around AD 560-573, a transaction), *P. Vat. Aphrod*. 4 (Aphrodito, 2nd half of the 6th century, selling a house), *P. Mich.* XIII 664 (Aphrodito, AD 585/586, selling part of a stock of grain), *P. Herm*. 24 (Hermoupolis, 6th or 7th century, transmission of rights), *Stud. Pal*. XX 227 (6th or 7th century, declaration of restitution from Herakleopolis), and *P. Herm*. 35, (Hermoupolis, 7th century, selling a house).

[1026] E.g. *P. Cair. Masp.* II 67156 (AD 570), a florist or flower vendor called Aurelia Tekrompia in Antinooupolis, using her money to pay for the upbringing of her children and the marriages of her three daughters. *P. Coll. Youtie* II 92 [*P. Cair. Masp*. I 67023](AD 569), a certain Martha, daughter of Menes, in Antinooupolis, a vendor of salted meat and food, using her earnings to free her sister from bondage to her father's guarantors. Beaucamp 1992, 179, 205.

[1027] *P.Cair.Masp*. I 67104. Ruffini 2008, 190.

Matrona's convent.[1028] The same text tells of the rich Antiochiane, wife of the patrician Sphorakios in Constantinople, whom Matrona had cured of a grave illness: Antiochiane offers one of her many estates to Matrona to be used as a convent, replacing the meagre rented lodgings used thus far.[1029] *Pratum Spirituale*, tells of a soft-hearted, orphaned unmarried girl in Alexandria, heir to rich parents, who gave away much of her fortune to a desperate and destitute man.[1030]

References to extremely wealthy women are also to be found among the Oxyrhynchus papyri from the late 6th century: a female landowner named Heraïs "of distinguished family"[1031] and the *patricia* Sophia, who owned at least 7,000 acres of land in Arsinoë.[1032] Other papyri mention the daughter of a former patrician named Flavia Christodote with estates probably extending throughout the region: an Alexandrian banker by the name Flavius Eustathius owed her the considerable sum of 4,392 *solidi*, a matter that, if need be, she was willing to pursue as far as Constantinople.[1033] Papyri from Aphrodito reveal a drawn-out dispute over some of the land surrounding the town that took place between the 540s and the 570s: it was handled by a certain Menas, the estate manager of the landowner Flavia Patricia, who exercised *pagarchical* responsibilities in the area.[1034] There is further Flavia Kyria, a wealthy landowner also recorded in papyri of the late 5th century.[1035] Other women of wealth in Oxyrhynchus in the 6th century included Flavia Anastasia, a rich female landowner who paid for the lead required for a public bathhouse,[1036] and Flavia Euphemia, who rented out a ground-floor room in one of her properties to the baker Aurelios Stephanos.[1037]

Regardless of the ideological framework placing them in the domestic sphere engaged in household activities, some women did possess and control financial assets, through which they engaged in economic life. As vendors or in the handicraft trade they were involved in non-domestic financial activities. Women with varying amounts of wealth used it in ways that were perceptible in the public sphere, for charity work, for example.[1038] On a more visible level they might endow

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[1028] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge,* chapters 40, 42, 44.

[1029] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge,* chapters 33-36. Sphorakios is mentioned as "the one who had constructed the all-holy and all-beauteous church of the great and victorious martyr Theodore". The church was situated on the main street (Mese), not far from Hagia Sophia. See Cyril Mango's annotation to the translation (ed. A-M Talbot 1996) notes 88-90 on Sphorakios. Mango dates Antiochiane's meeting with Matrona after Sphorakios' murder in 472, but the text does not indicate whether or not she is a widow, only calling her the wife of the patrician Sphorakios.

[1030] Moschos, *Prat.Spir*., chapter 207. The young woman meets a man who is deep in debt and ready to commit suicide. She uses her fortune to help him and eventually becomes destitute herself, having to resort to prostitution. It is specifically mentioned that she had no tutor and nobody to guide her in her financial transactions, hence she took decisions by herself. The story is referred to on several occasions: see e.g. Chapters II.E, 88, IV.C, 160, IV.D, 162.

[1031] *P.Oxy*. LXIII 4399. Sarris 2006, 88.

[1032] E.g. *SPP* VIII 1092. Sarris 2006, 89.

[1033] *PSI* I 76, line 6. Sarris 2006, 89, Ruffini 2008, 75-80, 91.

[1034] E.g. *P.Lond*. V 1660, *P.Cairo Masp*. I 67060. Sarris 2006, 105, 108, 110, 113, Ruffini 2008, 191-2, 195, Ruffini 2011, 420. Martindale (ed.) 1992, 970.

[1035] *P.Oxy*. XXXIV 2724, *P.Lond*. V 1798, *P.Oxy*. XVI 1947, 1948, *P.Oxy*. XVI 2003, *CPR* VII 24, line 5 and *SB* XVIII 13928. Sarris 2006, 89, and Ruffini 2008, 44-7.

[1036] *SB* VI 9368, *P.Oxy* XVI 2020, *PLRE* 3.61. Ruffini 2008, 50-1, 68, 72-5.

[1037] *P.Oxy.* VII 1038. Ruffini 2008, 70-1.

[1038] Cf. e.g. Moschos, *Prat.Spir*., chapter 127, on the old Phrygian widow who regularly distributed two coins as alms to everyone in the church of Sts. Cosmas and Damian in Jerusalem.

ecclesiastic institutions by means of direct donations, commissioning works of art, or investing money in building and repairing property.[1039] Patronage could also serve secular purposes: women of wealth and education could similar to men be interested in art and the protection of ancient art objects. The illustrated copy of Dioscurides' *De Materia Medica,* which belonged to Anicia Juliana evidences her more secular interests.[1040]

Talbot is of the opinion that one way, besides philanthropy and religious observation, that women of higher classes could be more active and visible outside the home was via patronage of the arts.[1041] On the other hand, in that patronage was expected of male members of the higher classes it was in the same way a normal form of social and cultural participation among women of the same social strata. It should not necessarily be seen merely as an outlet for female activity outside the domestic sphere but should rather be considered an integral part of the social behaviour expected from individuals of dignity, both male and female. Patronage of the arts and giving donations were part of upper-class behaviour. An element of the esteem of individuals was connected with their capacity to use their wealth to make endowments or purchase art objects and other cultural products. It was also a means of displaying one's position in society and as such could contain political connotations.[1042] These aspects are discussed further in Chapter V, in the discussion on the politics of art and architecture.

Aside from their direct professional input, charitable work and patronage, women participated in economic life as owners of large estates and as owners of or investors in business ventures of varying magnitude.[1043] Much of such financial activity could be dealt with through mediators, and did not necessitate the involvement of the female owner in the day-to-day handling of the business.[1044] Nevertheless, the business could have a public presence that on a symbolic level reminded of the female owner as in the case of commissioners and donors. A house designated to a woman is another example of 'absent presence' or symbolic manifestation, as the "glorious house" of a certain Sophia mentioned in a papyrus .[1045] Although it cannot be ascertained whether or not she owned the house, it is indicative of how property could be associated with a woman and so

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[1039] See the discussion in Chapter III.C, 126-31.

[1040] *Cod.Vindob.Med.Gr.* 1. Spatharakis 1976, 147, Kiilerich 2001, 171-2, and Brubaker 2010, 34 see the codex as a gift from grateful inhabitants of Honoratae, where she had financed a church building. However, such a lavish book was costly, hence Connor (2004, 110-11) believes that much about the frontispiece indicates a commission from Anicia Juliana. See also, Rapp 20005, 377. Cormack 2000d, 41-2, presents both views and sees them as not necessarily excluding each other.

[1041] Talbot 1997, 119, 128-9, Talbot 1994, 106.

[1042] Cf. Connor 2004, 95-6, pointing to the importance of visibility and publicity. See Garland 1999, 6, on the expectations of an empress to show her piety through donations and the creation of ecclesiastic establishments, as well as giving to petitioners and courtiers. See Maguire 2007, 154-7, on church mosaics as both political and private, exemplified by the apse in the mid-6th-century church of Euphrasius, Poreč, Istria.

[1043] Cf. Laiou 1981, 245-6, on women in the retail business or as owners of shops: "in the countryside, too, some women formed partnerships for the exploitation of mines and presumably for the sale of the product." See also Talbot 1997, 130-1.

[1044] Cf. Egyptian papyri recording complaints against a certain Menas, overseer of the estate of a local aristocratic woman by the name of Patricia, *P. Cairo Masp*. I 67002 and *P. Lodon.* V 1674. Sarris 2009, 106.

[1045] *Stud. Pal.* VIII 1090-1097 and *P. Erl*. 67. Beaucamp 1992, 136. See Chapter II.A, 62.

symbolically bring her into people's minds.[1046] As investors and donors women moulded public space through building activities, for example, thereby leaving an imprint on the surrounding society.

Women of wealth participated with their fortunes in the financial activities of both the family and society at large. A woman who was a substantial landowner might have had fiscal or municipal duties connected to her domains.[1047] Even owners of smaller properties had to pay for any necessary work related to it. One example is in a story mentioned earlier about a woman who was commissioning the digging of a well in the area of Apamea. The project was becoming costly, which troubled her particularly when no water was found at first, despite extensive digging.[1048]

Regardless of wealth, the mistress of a household was expected to participate in ensuring the upkeep of the family. Women were required to play their part in providing sustenance for family members when necessary. In normal circumstances, when the family was well provided for, no activity contrasting with accepted codes of female behaviour was necessary, but under irregular circumstances, in times of crisis, or if the family was poor, women might have to help in providing for and maintaining the family beyond the domestic sphere.[1049]

An example of extreme circumstances, when women joined in collective efforts to provide for their families, is given in *Miraculi St. Demetrii,* related to 7th-century Thessaloniki. A two-year blockade by Slavonic tribes, ending in an attempted siege to take the city, had left the inhabitants in great distress, lacking the necessary food supplies and suffering from starvation. In spite of this, an attack was diverted and eventually the imperial army defeated some of the surrounding tribes. The text describes how people from the city, as well as refugees who were living there, some of them seemingly resembling dead rather than living persons due to starvation, ventured outside the city walls with their wives and children. They went to the abruptly abandoned Slavonic settlements some ten kilometres north to pillage whatever they could find that was edible and useful, and that they could carry back on their shoulders.[1050] The short remark 'with women and children' (ἅμα γυναιξὶ καὶ τέκνοις) could, of course, be considered to some part a typical recurring phrase, but it suggests that in such circumstances everyone, women and children included, was engaged in efforts to obtain the necessities of life and that women, when needed, aided their husbands in these tasks.

Earlier in the same source reference is made to other sacrifices demanded of women due to the circumstances. Thessaloniki had been under siege for a long time, and no ships carrying grain had been able to reach the famished city. Eventually some ships were diverted to the port, but the imbalance between supply and demand increased prices so much that some men, having given what valuables and clothes they had, were forced to take even the earrings from their wives to pay for the

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[1046] Cf. Sophianae, the palace erected by Emperor Justin II for his wife Sophia, mentioned in *Anth. Gr.* IX:657 (by Marianus Scholasticus, second half of the 6th century), and Theophanes, *Chron.* 6061 [AD 568/9]. Baths restored by Justin II were also renamed Sophianae, Theophanes, *Chron.* 6062 [AD 569/70].

[1047] Beaucamp 1992, 12-3. Cf. Laiou 1981, 245-6.

[1048] Moschos, *Prat.Spir.* chapter 81. She turns to a miracle-performing icon for spiritual help. See Chapter III, 100.

[1049] Cf. Talbot 1997, 129-30, and Talbot 1994, 105-6.

[1050] *Mir. St. Dem.,* II.4 [279-280], (end of the 7th century).

much needed grain.[1051] As a chronicle, the text is not concerned with juridical nuances of ownership, thus it is impossible to judge whether these ornaments were considered the property of the women or family treasure they were using, but at the disposal of their husbands. In any case, the fact that the author exemplifies the extraordinary harshness of circumstances by mentioning this deprivation of personal embellishments makes it clear they had significance.[1052]

Two stories in *Pratum Spirituale* show that women were expected to provide for their family members. Both of them tell of wives who have to provide food for their imprisoned husbands, and there are other similarities. Both are about merchants who have lost their fortunes because of ships lost at sea and have been put in jail on account of their debts. Both wives have to provide basic nourishment, at least some bread, for their husbands in jail. The wife in the first story, which is set in the port of Tyros in Palestine, considers prostituting herself in her desperation to get the means to buy food.[1053] In the second story the wife has brought food to the prison and is sitting with her husband, eating it. Meanwhile, a rich man is visiting the facilities doing some charity work. He notices the beautiful woman and succumbs to the temptation of offering her the money to pay her husband's debts in return for her sexual favours, which she eventually declines.[1054] Both women ventured into public space to provide for their jailed husbands, which seems to have been expected of them in that food was not provided from public funds. This brought them into contact with strangers.

Extreme conditions such as war, famine or imprisonment were not a prerequisite for women to engage in life outside the home for economic reasons. Women in less wealthy families might be asked to assist in family-run workshops, to work as private entrepreneurs and vendors, or to earn money through a job outside the home so as to help with its upkeep.[1055] If the woman was a widow who only had small children the whole upkeep of the family might depend on her capacity to provide an income. One papyrus reveals that a widow in Antinooupolis called Aurelia Tekrompia had for thirteen years used her income as a florist or flower vendor to bring up four children and to see to that her three daughters got married. [1056] A story in the *Lives of the Eastern Saints* is about how the widowed Euphemia and her daughter pay for their upkeep by weaving products for noblewomen in

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[1051] *Mir. St. Dem.*, II.4 [251]. Cf. Stathakopoulos 2004, 61, 355-7. Sarris 2011, 181-2, 250-1, 309, on Avar and Slavonic assaults on and sieges of Thessaloniki.

[1052] Cf. *Life of St. John the Almsgiver*, chapter 7. Female refugees in Alexandria go to alms distributions arranged by the patriarch. Some of these begging women wore ornaments and bracelets that could have paid for food. Those entrusted with the alms distribution reported this to John, only to be told that they should just follow orders and the command of Christ to "Give to every man that asks of thee."

[1053] Moschos, *Prat.Spir.* chapter 186. Cf. Leontsini 1989, 76.

[1054] Moschos, *Prat.Spir.* chapter 189.

[1055] See Chapter IV.A, 145-8. Cf. Talbot 1997, 126-31, Talbot 1994, 105-6, and Laiou 1981, 245-6. Farmers' wives probably helped with the cultivation and gathering of crops alongside male family members. The *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 35, tells of a village woman who comes with her husband for a cure. Not yet cured, the couple is sent back to their village during the harvest season to take care of their crops, then they return to Theodore.

[1056] *P. Cair. Masp.* II 67156 (AD 570). The papyrus is about a settlement regarding inheritance and expenses between Aurelia and her now adult and married daughter Maria, particularly in relation to two houses owned in common by the parents and left in the charge of the widow. Beaucamp 1992, 179.

Amida.[1057] Adult children, on the other hand, were required by law to support a divorced or widowed mother who was destitute.[1058]

Family usually provided security for any individual, and in the absence of male relatives female family members were counted on. The remark of the innkeeper in the *Life of St. Mary / Marinos* is revealing. His only child, an unmarried daughter, falls pregnant. The raging innkeeper says, "I had but a single daughter, who I hoped would support me in my old age".[1059] The expectation was for her to be the means of safeguarding his upkeep when his own strength failed, the thought being that with a good marriage and a husband she would provide for her father.

Sometimes there was neither family nor home capable of provide security. This could be especially perilous for a woman.[1060] The Church and connected institutions had, for the most part, taken over many functions of providing for the needy by the early Byzantine period.[1061] The need for outside help might be in part only, temporary or permanent. A poor woman falling ill might have the support of a family, but it may lack the means to provide the necessary medical care. Alternatively, a woman might be left without any supporting network. A range of institutions, some general, others specifically intended for women, could give help and protection if necessary.[1062] Many of them were connected to a monastic or an ecclesiastic complex, and provided material help and shelter away from more public spaces. In addition to giving needed help they might also compensate for the lack of a domestic sphere giving protection. The *Life of St. Theodore* gives an example of such a refuge. Theodore sent children in need of a cure, especially girls, to his grandmother Elpidia in the convent of St. Christopher near Sykeon. There they would receive treatment and be taught their duties. Some of them left later, others stayed and became nuns. The text relates how Elpidia "had carefully provided everything necessary for the support of the women under her care; some had renounced this world, others were ill".[1063] Elpidia herself had given up her life as an innkeeper and courtesan to take refuge in a religious life.[1064] Convents might serve as refuges for women wanting to give up prostitution (consider reports on a convent established by

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[1057] John of Ephesus, *Lives*, chapter 12 (6th century) (Brock & Harvey, 1987, 126). See Chapters III.D, 133, IV.A, 146.

[1058] *Dig.* 25.3.5.2, 27.3.1.2-5, *Just.* 5.25.1. Arjava 1996, 86, 125, also notes that spouses did not automatically inherit from each other, but that such provisions had to be made separately by testament. A widow might therefore be dependent on support from her children if legal provision had not been made.

[1059] *Life of St. Mary / Marinos*, chapters 9-10. See Chapters II.B, 69, IV.B, 149.

[1060] E.g. Moschos, *Prat.Spir.* chapter 136. A Saracen woman, driven by hunger, is willing to exchange sex for food and offers herself to a hermit in the Jordan desert. He resists her sexual offers but provides her with food for as long as she remains in the area. See also chapter 207: an orphaned girl in Alexandria falling from fortune to destitution and prostitution. See Chapters II.E, 88, IV.C, 160, IV.D, 162. Cf. Leontsini 1989, 75-76, 101-2.

[1061] Cf. Talbot 1994, 106.

[1062] Cf. Talbot 1994, 105,115-7, who provides a list of the types of help that could be granted: "/–/, women and girls found refuge and support in homes for widows, hospitals for women, orphanages, and nunneries that took in battered and mentally ill women and prostitutes hoping for a better life."

[1063] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapters 25 & 32 (translated by E. Daws & N. H. Baynes). As is typical of the genre, the children are said to be plagued by unclean spirits, although it is impossible to know what that meant in practice. Cf. Talbot 1994, 119-21, on categories of women often seeking social care and protection inside a convent, such as widows, elderly women, refugees and the mentally ill. Cf. Talbot 1997, 137-8.

[1064] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 3, 25 & 32.

Empress Theodora especially for former prostitutes).[1065] *Pratum spirituale* also has a story about a prostitute passing by an inn outside the town of Aigaista who wants to leave her sphere of infamy. Two old religious men she meets in the inn take her to a nearby convent, where she eventually becomes a nun.[1066]

Nunneries and orphanages provided more permanent protection and assistance, whereas the maternity wards in Alexandria mentioned above provided temporary assistance.[1067] The instigation for their establishment was, according to the text, the poor women who came to the distribution of alms provided by the patriarch directly after having given birth. Ecclesiastic institutions provided relief for the poor by distributing food, money or clothes, usually to people begging outside the gates of the monastic institution or individuals gathered there for special occasions when such alms were distributed. Talbot studied *typika* for monasteries of later periods, many of which make provision for the regular distribution of alms to the poor. Food left over from meals could be allocated on a daily basis, whereas money and other alms could be distributed on special days of celebration.[1068] This type of charity is described in *Pratum Spirituale*, giving the example of a monastery that distributed five coins per head to the poor and the orphaned at Easter.[1069]

Poor women lacking the support of a family network, and with no special skills or profession, may not have had many options in terms of earning a living. They probably had to rely on alms, prostitution, or finding unskilled work. Mary of Egypt touches upon all three possibilities in her tale: she claims never to have taken money for her sexual services, but instead lived by begging and often by spinning coarse flax fibres.[1070] Whenever women took their trade outside the domestic sphere and worked in a the more public domain of society the reasons were usually financial and connected to their life circumstances. It was not the choice of well-to-do women of the higher classes.

Wealth not only supplied material security, it also provided acceptability. The mother of Theodore of Sykeon was an innkeeper and an unwed mother, but she also appeared to have some wealth. She is depicted as interacting with the local community. She visited a holy man in the vicinity before Theodore's birth and the son was baptised in the local church, in which, on account of his religious inclination he later became involved. He was educated in the local school. The family of women keeping the inn later changed their ways and concentrated on running the business, seemingly being successful and respected. High-ranking men were entertained and fed in their establishment, whereas the accumulated wealth eventually came to Theodore. This does not change

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[1065] Procopius, *Aedif.*, 1.9.1-10, Procopius, *Anecd.*, 17.5-6, and Malalas, *Chron*. 18.24 [440-1].

[1066] Moschos, *Prat.Spir.* chapter 31.

[1067] *Life of St. John the Almsgiver*, chapter A7. See Chapter III.D, 133, IV.A, 150. Cf. Talbot 1994, 117.

[1068] Talbot, 117-9.

[1069] Moschos, *Prat.Spir.* chapter 85. Easter was one of the occasions when people (not only the needy, but the whole congregation) were fed outside monasteries in connection with the different Easter services in their churches. Cf. *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 104, on an occasion during a famine when the wheat supply of the monastery was low and the person in charge of the food cellars was worried there would be no wheat for the reception and for feeding the large crowd on Palm Sunday; chapter 112, during the annual festival on the Saturday after Ascension people from all neighbouring villages gathered at Theodore's monastery for a church service and a communal meal in the area outside.

[1070] *The life of St. Mary of Egypt*, chapter 18. See also Chapters IV.A, 146, IV.C, 160.

the fact that Theodore's mother had a second illegitimate child, his much younger sister Blatta, before eventually leaving the inn and marrying respectably in Ancyra. Theodore's grandmother ended up as the respected leader of a small female religious community in the area. Despite their disreputable past, the two generations of female innkeepers managed to accumulate wealth and to live as accepted members of the local community, possibly partly because of their financial status.[1071]

[1071] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, 4-6, 9, 25, 33-4.

V The political arena

The political sphere of the Early Byzantine Empire cannot, of course, be defined in similar terms as a modern political arena. There were no official parties through which individuals could channel their ambitions and most of the population, men and women alike, were subjects rather than citizens with power to influence administrative and political decisions. Men in the higher strata of society could aspire to pursue an administrative career and to be involved in the political manoeuvring around the centre of power, in other words the imperial throne. The word 'politics' derives from the Greek word signifying matter concerning the *polis*, that is a city or in an vider sense a state. In that sense, everything that affects matters of state or local affairs, including attempts to interact with and influence institutions of power, flaunting power to impress the population, demonstrating sympathies and protesting, could be called political. It is in this broad sense that I interpret the political arena of early Byzantine society.

Women were excluded from most official politics, as they were from holding any offices or partaking in institutions engaged in political decision-making. In Talbot's opinion female exclusion from public office and official political life was a major reason why they are neglected in Byzantine sources: they tended to stay at home tending to the household and the family, and "thus played no role in the political and military events that predominate in narrative texts".[1072] Herrin also comments on women's limited political influence. She considers it to be restricted to a few exceptional individuals, and describes Byzantium as a strongly military society.[1073] Although Byzantine society experienced extensive periods of war and unrest, in my view the period spanning the 6th to the 8th centuries was no more militarised than other societies in crisis throughout history, and in which men exercised official power. Moreover, women are not totally neglected in the sources, although they are not always present in the same way as male players. Despite their exclusion from official politics, I would argue that women did play their part and have a role in politics, even if in a lesser quantity than that of men. Their means of influencing matters might be somewhat different.[1074] What is more, the classic democracy of Greek city states, with the relatively broad participation of the free male population, had already to a large part ceased to function in the Roman Empire. Most of the male population as well were not in that sense citizens who could potentially partake in decision-making but were rather subjects dependent on the goodwill of rulers and the ruling class.[1075] The exclusion of women from political life should be seen in this light. It

[1072] Talbot 1994, 105-6.

[1073] Herrin 1984, 183.

[1074] Cf. Bourdieu 1977, 41, on Kabyle society in which women's unofficial power worked by proxy. Arjava 1996, 253-4. See Kazhdan 1989, 1, who questions the overly accentuated presentation of Byzantine women as victims of sexual bias and as "living in a male-dominated environment, in a military society where men inevitably exercised power, under the oppression of 'patriarchy'," directing his criticism at Herrin and Galatariotou in particular, but also to some extent at Angold. According to Laiou 1982, 202-3, in practice women partook in activities that went beyond legal statements and accepted ideology, and social class was occasionally more important than gender with regard to women's political activities. See also Chapters I.D, 34, IV.D, 164.

[1075] Cf. Messis 2006, 869, on a shift in the 4th century in the concept of imperial power, starting to acquire more characteristics of a divine monarchy, also the increasing use of eunuchs in the court and the introduction of oriental

was their exclusion from an official career in administration and government that could be considered inequality in relation to the male population. Other obstacles to their political involvement were general attitudes and traditional views of female exclusion.

Talbot also suggests that women, lacking political power, tended to direct their energies to becoming involved in religious controversies.[1076] One could argue, however, that religious controversies in Early Byzantine society were connected to political power struggles and were in many ways politically charged, and that the two spheres cannot be entirely separated.[1077] Religious conduct was, apart from its spiritual aspects, also part of politics in Late Antiquity and the early Mediaeval period, as religion had an important role in public life. A political aspect of women's participation in religious controversies therefore has to be acknowledged. In the following I discuss women as visible participants in the Early Byzantine political culture.

Imperial women and those belonging to the senatorial and aristocratic class were the best positioned to be active on the political scene. They usually had the requisite wealth, social position, personal contacts and family relations, as well as prestige and influence. In many ways they shared the privileges of their male counterparts. I consider the special position of the empress first, and then discuss the situation of other female members of the nobility. This latter category includes women with an imperial heritage or connections, such as the mothers, daughters and sisters of emperors, as well as women belonging to noble families through marriage or by birth, or both in that people tended to marry inside their social class. Art and architecture were major channels of ideology and their role in politics is also discussed. Common women lacked such means, but there is evidence of petitioning, protesting, hiding, siding, rioting and even manhandling when ideological sentiments ran high.

A. Empresses

Although the law did not grant women the right to hold governmental office, Early Byzantine society did, in practice, recognise a certain official position for the spouse of the emperor, the empress.[1078] Several treatises have been written on the position of Byzantine empresses, which go into detail on different aspects of their activities and political power.[1079] Of relevance here are aspects related to public space and visibility, as well as to the empress's position in relation to the emperor. The

features and traditions resembling the Persian court. See McCormick 2000, 151-3 on eunuchs at court in the 5th and 6th centuries.

[1076] Talbot 1997, 134. Women with political influence, such as Empress Theodora, were also involved in religious controversies, see e.g. the discussion in Garland 1999, 25-29, and Foss 2002, 142-9.

[1077] Cf. Garland 1999, 23, 36, on contemporary opinions on a deliberate politics of 'divide and rule' or 'keeping both sides happy' on the part of Justinian and Theodora, through supporting opposite sides in the controversy between Orthodox and Monophysites in the early 6th century and on how Theodora's religious concerns motivated her interference in politics in the West.

[1078] See e.g. Angelova 2004, 3-6, 8-10 and James 2001, *passim*, for a discussion on the power of empresses in the 4th to the 8th centuries. Cf. Missiou 1982, 489 on the notable position given in Byzantine society to the spouse of the emperor as the 'first lady' of the Empire. See also James 2009, 40-1.

[1079] E.g. Mastlev 1966, Bensammer 1976, Missiou 1982, Bosch 1982, Garland 1999, as well as Cecaretti 2001 and Foss 2002 specifically discuss Theodora.

transformation of the role of the emperor's spouse began in Late Antiquity, and assumed momentum in the Christian society of the new capital Constantinople.[1080] Empresses were part of the symbolism of imperial power as early as in the 5th century.[1081] From the 6th century onwards the emperor and empress were frequently envisaged as a pair, a ruling couple sharing the imperial throne. Thus, at least in a symbolic sense, empresses had a shared in power.[1082]

Empress Ariadne, wife of Anastasius, seems to have been the first to be depicted with the Emperor on a consular diptych, such as the one for Clementinus' consulship in 513.[1083] Two small medallions with portraits of the imperial couple appear in the upper part of the diptych, one on each side of a cross. The seated image of an empress on two diptychs from ca. 500 is also usually identified as Ariadne.[1084] As the daughter of Emperor Leo I and his wife Verina Ariadne had imperial status in her own right. Moreover, she transmitted, to some extent, the right to the throne to the two following emperors, as she was married to Emperors Zeno (died 491) and Anastasius I, consecutively. She is portrayed with her new husband on commemorative marriage coins from 491.[1085] As Brubaker and Tobler note in their article on gender and money, images on coins were a tool to circulate information about the state and to communicate aspects of imperial ideology. Portraits of empresses on Byzantine coinage therefore bear witness to how imperial women were presented to the collective gaze.[1086] Ariadne, with her first husband Zeno, were portrayed in a pair of statues erected at the entrance of the Chalke palace, and possibly also elsewhere.[1087] There is also mention of a picture in the church in Blachernae depicting Ariadne with her parents, Emperor Leo I (457-74) and Empress Verina, and their grandson the younger Leo around an enthroned Virgin.[1088]

The subsequent Empress Euphemia, wife of Justin I, was, like her husband, of humble origin. She features less in the sources and seems to have been more withdrawn from public life. Nevertheless, her position as Empress still gave her importance and even Procopius mentions her as jointly ascending to ruler with Justin.[1089] She was hailed with the Emperor by the crowds, and she was included in correspondence with Pope Hormisdas during attempts to normalise relationships with Rome between 518 and 520. Some letters were addressed to her and she sent at least one letter to the Pope, and both Hormisdas and the patriarch John mention her together with Justin in their own correspondence. Other female participants in this correspondence were the ladies Anastasia,

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[1080] Herrin 2013, 164-5.

[1081] Herrin 2013, 171.

[1082] Cf. Herrin 2013, 175, on how transferred Christian wedding imagery on coins commemorating imperial weddings enhanced the symbolism of shared responsibilities as a ruling couple. See McCormick 2000, 146-50, on the development of the significance of the empress from the mid-5th through the 6th centuries.

[1083] Delbrueck 1929, 117-21, N 16. The Empress' portrait medallion has a secondary position to that of the Emperor on diptychs from 515 and 517, but at this point Ariadne was deceased: Delbrueck 1929, 121-33, N 17-21. Also, Volbach 1976, 35-7, Nos. 15-21, Taf. 7-9. Cf. Herrin 2013, 171.

[1084] Volbach 1976, 49-50, Nos. 51-2, Taf. 27; Delbrueck 1929, 201-8, N 51-2.

[1085] Brubaker & Tobler 2000, 581-2, fig. 5. In this she followed in the footsteps of Pulcheria, sister of Theodosios II.

[1086] Brubaker & Tobler 2000, 572-3.

[1087] *Parast.Synt.Chron*. 80, and Al. Cameron 1977, 48-50. Cf. *Patria,* II.27-28 [Berger 2013, 67].

[1088] *Cod. Par. gr.* 1447, fol. 258, Cameron 1976, 129. Cf. Milinović 2000, 364-5. Cameron 2000a, 11.

[1089] Procopius, *Anecd.*, 6.17, & 9.47-9. Her original name was Lupicina.

Palmatia, and Anicia Juliana.[1090] Empress Euphemia also followed the tradition of imperial patronage. Together with Justin she built a convent and a church dedicated to St. Euphemia in the district of Olybrius in Constantinople, where a statue of her was situated and where she was eventually buried.[1091] Euphemia is also said to have been the one who opposed Justinian's marriage to Theodora, which took place only after her death.[1092]

Theodora, wife of Justinian I, was made *augusta* at the same time as Justinian rose to the position of *augustus*, in other words Emperor.[1093] There are many examples of officially displayed high honours given to Theodora, including the famous mosaics in the San Vitale church in Ravenna.[1094] The Emperor and Empress are depicted with their respective entourages on opposite walls of the church apse, in equally prominent positions: the Empress and her attendants constitute the symmetrical counterpart to the Emperor and his courtiers.[1095] There was at least one other similar mosaic, which has not survived but is mentioned in Procopius' *De Aedificies*. He describes a mosaic at the Chalke gate in the palace in Constantinople depicting Justinian and Theodora standing together surrounded by senators and receiving homage from conquered foreign kings.[1096] A painting depicting Justinian and Theodora being crowned by Christ is said to have existed in the church of St. John in Ephesus, the reconstruction of which had been sponsored by them.[1097] Theodora's monogram appeared together with that of Justinian on the pillar capitals of the same church, as well as in churches such as those of Sts. Sergius and Bacchus, St. Irene, and Hagia Sophia.[1098] Theodora was also present in other ways in the cathedral built by Justinian. Her name appeared on the chancel screen and in an inscription around the high altar, and the embroidered altar hanging is described by Paulos Silentiarios as depicting the imperial couple guided by the Virgin and stretching out their

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[1090] Vasiliev 1950, 91-2, 137-43, 151, 153-5, 158, 171, 179-3, 199-200.

[1091] *Patria*, II.26 & III.183. Cf. Vasiliev 1950, 91-2.

[1092] Procopius, *Anecd.*, 9.47. Cf. Vasiliev 1950, 91-2, 98.

[1093] Croke 2005, 77 (Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *On the Ceremonies*, 1.95).

[1094] See Fig. 7 a. Deichmann 1958, Taf. 358-61. Deichmann 1969, 241-3, Abb. 285, Deichmann 1976, 180-7. Barber 1990, *passim*, discusses the mosaic from a gender perspective. He does not deny the high honour given to Theodora, but he underlines the extra elements needed to emphasise her position, whereas the power position of the Emperor is 'natural' and unproblematic. Cf. Adreescu-Treadgold & Treadgold 1997, 708-12; Garland 1999, 21; Herrin 2001, 4-5; von Simson 1948, 27-33, & pl. 2, 4, 18-19; McClanan 2002, 121-129, Cormack 2000d, 60-2, Cameron 2000b, 67, and Alchermes 2005, 346-8.

[1095] Barber 1990, 20-3, 33-40, focusses the discussion on the differences between Justinian and his entourage and the presentation of Theodora. He argues that, as a woman, Theodora needed extra 'props' (such as a heightened stature compared to her followers, more lavish jewellery and a niche above her) to lift her to a position of partial power somewhat equalling that of Justinian. Even so, this kind of symmetric portrayal was new. Andreescu-Treadgold & Treadgold 1997, 711-2, 718-22 offer an insightful critique of earlier interpretations, including that of Barber, and identify some of the retinue and some of political intentions behind the imagery. Cf. Deichmann 1969, 155-6, on written evidence of 5th-century mosaics in the apse of S. Giovanni Evangelista in Ravenna depicting Theodosius II with Eudokia and Arcadius with Eudoxia, but here the symmetry seems to be between the imperial couples. See also Delbrueck 1929, 34-5, 40, Brubaker 1997, 53-4, and Angelova 2004, 4.

[1096] Procopius, *Aedif.* 1.10.11-19. Cf. Cameron 1976, 140, Garland 1999, 21, Foss 2002, 151, Barber 1990, 38-9, Angelova 2004, 10, Cameron 2000b, 67, and Alchermes 2005, 344-5.

[1097] Procopius, *Aedif.* 5.1.6. Foss 2002, 148, Foss 1979, 88-9, and Alchermes 2004, 359-61, figs. 7-9.

[1098] Foss 2002, 148, referring to A. Van Millinger, *Byzantine Churches in Constantinople*, London 1912, 73-4, 97, 102, and Foss 1979, 89. Deichmann 1976, 32. Cesaretti 2001, 287, figs. 39, 40 and 41. On Theodora's possible investment in the church of Sts. Sergius and Bacchus and an inscription there honouring her, see Chapter III.C, 128.

hands towards Christ.[1099] According to Procopius, Justinian and Theodora together were responsible for building a hospice in Constantinople.[1100] Two inscriptions have been found in the region of Bostra in Syria, one connected to a chapel in the city naming Theodora and Justinian as "the orthodox emperors", the other mentioning a church built by "our most pious rulers, Theodora and Justinian" on a boundary stone in the desert.[1101] Other inscriptions show that the Empress joined the Emperor in receiving ritual acclamations, and some of Justinian's *Novellae* pay homage to her.[1102] A consular diptych for Justin (Constantinople 540) depicts both Justinian and Theodora at the upper end on either side of a medallion with a bust of Christ, similar to Ariadne with Anastasius I.[1103] Theodora is depicted alone in a statue on a porphyry column in front of the baths of Arcadius, and cities and constructions were named in her honour.[1104]

The space Procopius gives Theodora in his writings (both his formal texts and his secret history) is indicative of her importance. Whatever his opinion of her might have been, he could not ignore her position and power.[1105] Procopius claims that Theodora introduced the performing of the *proskynesis* (reverence by prostrating oneself before an imperial person) before the empress as well as the emperor: previously she had not received such reverence.[1106] A short epigram has survived in *Anthologia Graeca*, probably originally an inscription in Ephesus, which mentions the joint crowning of Justinian and Theodora by the patriarch John.[1107] John Malalas in his chronicle balances a list of Justinian's new constructions in Antioch with a church and a basilica that Theodora built there.[1108] Similarly, in his official historical accounts Procopius connects Theodora with Justinian's

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[1099] Paulos Silentiarios, *Ekphrasis,* 714-7, 792-805. Cameron 1976, 129, 140. Cf. McClanan 2002, 129-30. Foss 2002, 148, (on the inscription, reference to George Cedrenus, *Historiarum compendium*, ed. I. Bekker, Bonn 1838, vol. I, p.677), also *Corpus Inscriptorum Graecorum*, IV, 8643. Caesaretti 2001, 284.

[1100] Procopius, *Aedif*., I.11.26-7. Croke 2005, 73.

[1101] *Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie*, 4, no. 1675*ter*, & 13, *Bostra* (ed. M. Sartre, Paris 1982), no. 9137. See Foss 2002, 149, who connects the inscriptions with a poorhouse built there by Justinian, mentioned in Procopius, *Aedif.* 5.9.22.

[1102] *Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie*, I.146 (inscription above the gate of Cyrrhus in Syria). G. Dagron & D. Feissel, *Inscriptions de Cilicie* (Paris 1987), 97 no. 52. *Nov*. 8 c. 1 (AD 535) mentions as the emperor's partner in deliberation his "most August Consort whom God has given", and at the end (*ad fin)* has officials swear an oath to both the emperor and his wife to carry out their duties. Cf. Humfress 2005, 170. *Nov.* 30 c. 6 (AD 536) states that officials received at court should also pay their respect to the empress. Foss 2002, 151.

[1103] Volbach 1976, 41, No. 33 and Taf. 17; Delbrueck 1929, 34-5, N 34.

[1104] Procopius, *Aedif.* 1.11.8-9 (statue), and e.g. 4.7.5 (the city of Theodoropolis in Moesia), 6.5.10 (the Theodorianae baths in Carthage). Cf. Cameron 1976, 136. Foss 2002, 151.

[1105] E.g. Procopius, *Anecd.* 10.13, stating that the imperial couple "did nothing whatever separately in the course of their life together." (translated by H.B. Dewing). See Procopius, *Bell.* 24.32-37, recording her as present at a critical council of war during the riot of 532, and Procopius, *Anecd*.14.8, hinting that Theodora attended meetings of the *consistorium*, where the senate and the Emperor's advisors assembled. Cf. Herrin 2013, 182-4 on records of her as an insider in the circles of power. See Garland 1999, 30 on the collegiality of the imperial rule and Theodora's position as a powerful co-regent. In the view of Brubaker 2004a, 98-9, the portrayal of Theodora in the *Anecdota* is as much about Justinian as about her, in an attempt to discredit the Emperor. Cameron 2000b, 67, 77-8.

[1106] Procopius, *Anecd*. 30.21-26. Cf. *Nov.* 30 c. 6 (AD 536), on officials making reverence before Empress. Cf. Cameron 1976, 136, notes to lines 157-8 of Corippus' text. Garland 1999, 20, 30. Foss 2002, 151, 156.

[1107] *Anth. Gr*. I:91.

[1108] Malalas, *Chron.* 17.19 [423] (for AD 527/28), for Justinian: churches, a hospice, baths, & a cistern; for Theodora: the church of the Archangel Michael & the basilica of Anatolius. Cf. Garland 1999, 20-1. Also, John Lydus, *De.Mag.*

charity and building activities.[1109] To avert local rivalry it appears that the village of Aphrodito in Egypt was put under the personal protection of the empress.[1110] Theodora is also mentioned alongside Justinian as benefactor of the defeated Vandal royal family of Gelimer, distributing money and land.[1111] She is positioned as a counterpart of the emperor in several of these cases, and at least on the symbolic and propagandistic level, she is presented as almost his equal, as the other half of a ruling couple.[1112]

The trend continued with Theodora's successor Empress Sophia, the wife of Justin II, who was as much presented in public as almost an official co-ruler.[1113] Corippus' long poem in honour of the new rulers is mentioned above. It is interesting in several ways, not least because of the prominent position it gives to the new Empress Sophia, next to the Emperor. Sophia is described throughout the text as either with Justin II or in actions paralleling his. The only time she is not depicted in this way is in purely official acts, in other words his crowning and when he receives an official foreign delegation, the two situations in which he is most clearly in the role of the highest official of the state.[1114] In all other respects Sophia is presented in words and in a position that could be described as an unofficial co-ruler.[1115] She accompanies Justin as he is escorted by senators to

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prooem. 3.15., from later in Justinian's regime after Theodora's death: her charitable works were famous enough to be incorporated as a chapter in the table of contents, but the text is now missing. Foss 2002, 148-9, on Theodora's involvement in building activities.

[1109] Procopius, *Aedif*. 1.2.17, 1.9.5-10, 1.11.24-27, 5.3.14, 6.5.12-15, two hospices for destitute or far away travellers, a convent for former prostitutes, repairs to a highway in Bithynia, and settlements in the re-conquered North Africa. Cf. Garland 1999, 21. Herrin 2001, 22.

[1110] *P. Cairo Masp.* III 67283. Sarris 2006, 99, 108, Sarris 2009, 106, Ruffini 2008, 148-9, 153, 177-9. Cf. Brubaker 2005, 438.

[1111] Procopius, *Bell*. 4.9.13-14.

[1112] See Angelova 2004, *passim*., for the development of the iconography for the Empress as well as her position as a ruling partner and counterpart to the Emperor before and up to the 6th century. Angelova sees it as a gradual process, as the Empress gradually acquires parallel attributes of rule to those of the Emperor. The 5th-century *agustae* display many characteristics, and the empress is already presented as a co-ruler in the ivories of Ariadne (ca. 500; Volbach 1976, nos. 51 & 52). Cf. McClanan 2002, 65-92 on Ariadne in relation to traditional imperial iconography and representations of power. See also Deichmann 1969, 120-3, 155-6, Deichmann 1974, 123, Deichmann 1976, 180-7, Deichmann 1989, 314, with comments on imperial iconography and its development.

[1113] Cf. Garland 1999, 40, 47-49, McClanan 2002, 149-178, Angelova 2004, 4-5, 9-10, Brubaker 2005, 442-3.

[1114] Corippus, *In laudem*, II:84-164, and III:213-407.

[1115] E.g. Corippus, *In laudem*, Praefatio:21-26, I:64ff., II:1ff., II:50ff., II:164-174, II:189ff., III:61ff., IV:265ff. Cf. II:20ff. Justin mentions in his prayer that all creation is under the command of Adam and Eve (***NB!*** both of them together), which symbolically parallels the co-rule of Justin and Sophia. E.g. Cameron 1976, 121, comment to line 23, 136 comment to lines 157-8, and 140 comment to lines 272f., notes on the prominence of Sophia already before Justin's accession, of them repeatedly being treated as a pair, and Corippus often dividing each set piece of his narrative into two parallel sections reporting Justin's and Sophia's actions, respectively. Evagrius, *Hist. Eccl*. V.2 [197] has a hostile account of Justin II and Sophia, claiming the corps of a personal enemy was defiled by both. Cf. Garland 1999, 40-42. Bensammar 1976, 271-8, 8th to 12th-century, on empresses with title of *augusta* as co-ruler with the Emperor, with certain differences in their position. The Emperor, as creator of law stands above it, whereas the Empress is a subject under the law, as is anyone else (based on an interpretation of *Dig.* 1.3.31). She also sees the Empress as defined by and dependent on the Emperor, whereas the Emperor is not defined by the Empress. See also, Brubaker & Talbot 2000, 575. On the legal position of the *augusta* and criticism of some of the interpretations of *Dig.* 1.3.31, see Bosch 1982, 500-1, 503. Cf. Foss 2002, 170-5 on the power of Theodora and its connection to, dependence upon, and original derivation from Justinian.

the imperial palace during the night of the death of the previous Emperor Justinian.[1116] When Justin goes to pray before the coronation, she goes to pray in another church.[1117] When the Emperor is hailed by the people and the Green and Blue factions at the Hippodrome, the Empress is also getting attention, although less ceremonial, receiving prayers of blessing.[1118] Traditional protocol would probably not allow an empress to be saluted in the official ceremony, but this is compensated by paralleling the honour showed to the Emperor with well-wishing prayers addressed to the Empress. Sophia also takes a prominent role in the funeral preparations for Emperor Justinian,[1119] and sits beside the new Emperor at the official banquet in the evening.[1120] In all but the most official acts (the crowning, the salute in the Hippodrome and the official reception of foreign diplomats) she is his equal and they are treated throughout the poem as a ruling couple.

In isolation, the poem could be taken as the flattering words of a poet wishing to attain the new empress' good opinion. However, other sources confirm the position of the empress as the in part recognised other half of the entity constituting the ruling couple of the Empire. One example is an inscription from Téboursouk, saluting Justin II and Empress Sophia as a couple:

> [Christogram] Hail our most Christian masters /
> and most invincible rulers /
> the augustae Justin and Sophia. This fortification /
> Thomas, most excellent prefect happily built.[1121]

[1116] Corippus, *In laudem*, I:187ff. The text mentions that this time she was not accompanied by "her usual crowd". Cameron 1976, 137, considers whether this refers to a court of attendants, crowds of admirers or supplicants surrounding her when she was in the city. Cf. Malalas, *Chron*. 18.25 & Theophanes, *Chron*. 186.8-13 (AD 532/3) [6025] on Theodora travelling with a huge retinue, and the *Life of Sts. David, Symeon, and George of Lesbos*, 195 (9th century) on a rich widow in Constantinople usually moving around with attendants. Sophia's "crowd" probably refers to attendants.

[1117] Corippus, *In laudem*, II:47ff. See Chapter III.A, 104.

[1118] Corippus, *In laudem*, II:310ff. Cf. Theophylact, *Hist.* 8.10, on how the usurper Phocas, having been crowned Emperor, proceeds to crown his wife Leontia Empress, and demands that the circus factions gather and celebrate her triumph in the accustomed way.

[1119] Corippus, *In laudem*, I:248, 272ff. See Chapter III.A, 112-3. Cf. Garland 1999, 2, 4, 42 on the duty of the Empress crowned *augusta* as orchestrator of ceremonials at court and the political aspects of the portrayal of Sophia.

[1120] Corippus, *In laudem*, III:85ff.

[1121] *CIL VIII*, 1434 = *ILS* 833, dated AD 565-578. *Salvis dominis nostris xristianissimis / et invictissimis imperatoribus / Iustino et Sofia Augustis. Hanc munitionem / Tomas, excellentissimus prefectus feliciter aedificavit* (translated by the author). See Featherstone 2008, 505, on the preference of *augusta* to *basilissa* even after the early 7th century when *basileus* was preferred for the emperor. See Bensammer 1976, 272-8 on the use of *augusta* for Empress from the end of the 8th to the end of the 12th centuries. Missiou 1982, 489-94 notes that imperial spouses of the early and middle Byzantine period were seemingly crowned *augusta* only after giving birth to children, the title also being connected to their role as providers of heirs. She mentions three exceptions, two of which she explains as obscurities in Theophanes' text: Heraklios I's first wife Eudokia (which remains unexplained), Leo IV's wife Irene, and Constantine VI's second wife Theodote. On Irene, see Nikephoros, *Brev*. 88, and Theophanes, Chron. 6261 [AD 768/9]. Lilie 1996, 41-2 notes that Irene being crowned *augusta* just before her marriage to Leo IV was unusual. Missiou seems to disregard Theodora, for whom the title *augusta* is used, although she did not give Justinian an heir. Cf. Garland 1999, 38, 40,129, with a list of empresses not given the title *augusta*. She also mentions Sophia's adoption of the title *Aelia*, used earlier by Theodosian empresses.

Sophia was also the first empress to be depicted with the emperor on coinage for regular circulation. The imperial couple appear enthroned together on the obverse of the *follis* (copper coin) from Justin II's reign. They are depicted symmetrically, equal in size, one holding the globe, the other the sceptre.[1122] Empresses had featured on commemorative gold coins, but in this case the *follis* was a small copper coin for everyday use. Hence, the image of the empress positioned next to the emperor was present in ordinary life, handled by the population on a daily basis.[1123] Bronze weights depicting both Justin and Sophia have also been found.[1124] Images of empresses or female allegories were not unusual on day-to-day measuring objects such as steelyards and weights.[1125]

Some poems in *Anthologia Graeca* tell of publicly displayed images of Justin II and Sophia. A poem about a portrait of Sophia is directly followed by one about a statue of Justin II. Three other poems concern both spouses, one about gilded images of Justin and Sophia presented as the imperial couple and the other two about statues of them.[1126] John of Ephesus mentions bronze statues of Justin and Sophia, which may be the same ones as in one of the epigrams.[1127] A poem by Agathias about a portrait of the curator Thomas situated in the property of Placidia also mentions "the sacred pair", although it is unclear to whom this refers.[1128] Another poem mentions a sun dial in Constantinople donated jointly by Justin and Sophia.[1129] According to an early-8th-century chronicle a group of gilded statues representing Sophia with her daughter Arabia and her niece Helena stood at the Milion in the very centre of Constantinople.[1130] Other texts tell of four statues of Justin, Sophia, Arabia and either Justin's mother Vigilantia or the chamberlain Narses (depending on the version), set up by Narses in the harbour of Sophiae.[1131]

An example of Sophia's political engagement and another instance of her duplicating Justin

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[1122] Garland 1999, 50-1 & plate 3 (*follis* of Justin II minted at Kyzikos in 567/8, Whittemore Collection: Harvard University). Issues minted in Carthage have Sophia's name added to Justin's. See also, Brubaker & Tobler 2000, 583-5, fig. 6. Missiou 1982, 493 notes that only imperial spouses who had borne children are represented on coins, and that there are no coins with Euphemia (wife of Justin I) or Theodore (wife of Justinian I), neither of which had borne the ruler any children. See Brubaker 2005, 442-3 on changes in the appearance of empresses on coinage in the 6th century, which she interprets as diminishing rather than increased importance. Cf. Angelova 2004, 5, McClanan 2002, 159, Cameron 1976, 121, commentary to line 23, and 140, who adds that Sophia also appears with Justin in the headings of official documents preserved among the papyri.

[1123] Cf. Brubaker & Tobler 2000, 572-4, 581, 590-1, on copper coins as vehicles for spreading ideas and ideals, and the ideological use of imperial female figures on coinage.

[1124] Vikan 1990, 152. Cf. McClanan 2002, 29-64 on the depiction of empresses on bronze weights.

[1125] Herrin 2013, 166-7.

[1126] *Anth.Gr.* IX:803-804, 810, 812-813 (anonymous). Planudes' manuscript ascribes authorship of the last one to Cyrus the ex-consul, who was probably a contributor to Agathias' *Kyklos,* Al. Cameron 1982, 226-7. Cf. Al. Cameron 1977, 49, 56-8.

[1127] John of Ephesus, *Hist. Eccl*. 3.24. Garland 1999, 47.

[1128] *Anth.Gr.* XVI:41 (Agathias Scholasticus, 2nd half of the 6th century), probably Justin II and Sophia, although Justinian I and Theodora cannot be excluded: Garland 1999, 47 note 51, & Cameron & Cameron 1966, 9.

[1129] Cf. *Anth.Gr.* IX:770. Al. Cameron 1977, 58.

[1130] *Parast. Syn. Chron*. 35. Cameron & Herrin 1984, 95. See also *Patria* II.30. Cameron 1976, 154 comment to line 72f. Cf. Garland 1999, 48.

[1131] *Patria,* II.62 & III.37[Berber 2013, 93, 160]. Cameron 1976, 134 comment to line 106, and 154 comment to line 72f. Cameron 1980, 70-71. Garland 1999, 48. The harbour was built by Justin II and named after Sophia, Theophanes, *Chron.* 6072 [AD 579/80].

II's activities is reported in John of Ephesus' accounts of the religious controversies in the late 6th century. Attempting to convert monks back to the orthodox faith, first the Emperor and the next day the Empress personally visited monasteries offering gifts and trying to urge the monks into submission.[1132] The collegiality of Justin and Sophia was also evidenced through diplomacy abroad. A gilded cross, the so-called 'Vatican cross' containing a fragment of the True Cross, with symmetrically placed portraits of the rulers in its arms, was donated to Rome.[1133] Another fragment of the True Cross was donated in the names of both Justin II and Sophia to the community of the Holy Cross, later the convent of St. Radegund in Poitiers (Gaul), in around AD 568. That Sophia was heavily involved in the latter donation is clear from a panegyric written by Venantius Fortunatus on the occasion, referring to Justin as a new Constantine and Sophia as a new Helen, and the Empress is presented as sharing in the imperial power and given equal space in the text. The poem gives the impression that arranging the donation of the relic to the newly founded monastery of the Merovingian ex-queen Radegund was Sophia's doing, praising her role in making it happen. On the other hand, depicting her spreading the blessing of the True Cross is also a fit rhetorical parallel to that of Helen originally finding it.[1134]

The position of an empress was also related to her personality and personal prestige.[1135] Sophia was a powerful woman in her own right. As the niece of Empress Theodora she boasted imperial relations. She was involved in the politics of the Empire and in power struggles before Justin's accession to the throne, during his mental illness and after his death.[1136] Her high personal prestige is also witnessed in an epigram on Justin II's donation to a church dedicated to the Virgin Mary, referring to him as, "The divine Justin, the husband of Sophia".[1137] Sophia's aunt Theodora could not claim high lineage, which points to an elevation of the position of empress as it became more official from the 6th century onwards, regardless of the individual.[1138] The public representations of imperial couples of the 6th century can be compared with the late-4th-century reliefs on the base of the obelisk in the Hippodrome in Constantinople, depicting Emperor Theodosius I (379-95) in the imperial box, the *kathisma.* In this case male members of the imperial family, together with male dignitaries, flank the Emperor. The imperial women play hardly any part and are more or less invisible in the context.[1139] These reliefs predate by less than two centuries the mosaics of Justinian I and Theodora and the artistic references to Justin II and Sophia.

[1132] John of Ephesos, *Hist. Eccl.*1.11. Garland 1999, 47. The monks sided with the Monophysites.

[1133] Garland 1999, 45, 48-49, Cesaretti 2001, 328, fig. 45, McClanan 2002, 163-8 and fig. 7.4. & 7.5. Cf. Cameron 1976, 129, and Deichmann 1969, 123-4, also mentioning portraits of Justin and Sophia sent to Rome and displayed in the main church.

[1134] George, 1995, xix, xxiii, 111-115, 129-130. Garland 1999, 45, 48-49.

[1135] Cf. James 2009, 40-1. See Arjava 1996, 254 on strong female imperial figures in Late Antiquity.

[1136] Evagrius, *Hist.Eccl.* V.12-3 [208], John of Ephesus, *Hist.Eccl.* 3.11, Theophanes, *Chron.* 6065, 6071 [AD 572/3, 578/9]. Cameron 1976, 121, comment to line 23. Garland 1999, 1, 40-57. She receives an envoy from Persia, deputising for Justin II during his mental illness. Cf. Whitby 2000, 86-7, 94-5, 99. Sarris 2011, 232.

[1137] *Anth.Gr.* I:2.

[1138] Cf. Garland 1999, 13-15, and Foss 2002, 141-143, 154-1555, 159-161, 164-169.

[1139] See von Simson 1948, pl. 5b, for an illustration of the east side relief. Symptomatically Garland (1999) begins her treaty on Byzantine empresses from Theodora and the year 527. Note, however, *Cod. Par. gr.* 1447, fol.258, describing a picture of Verina, Ariadne, Leo I (457-74), and younger Leo in Blachernae church, Cameron 1976, 129.

Corippus shows Sophia in the *kathisma* with Justin II, after his succession, receiving blessings from the gathered people.[1140] Her successor Empress Ino, or Anastasia as she was named thereafter, is also said to have been presented to the crowd at the Hippodrome and saluted by the factions, after she had been given the royal insignia in the palace in the presence of the senate and the patriarch.[1141] Anastasia also followed Sophia in being represented on small copper coins, the half-*follis*, on which the imperial couple are depicted together, enthroned.[1142] However, whereas Sophia appears on coins minted throughout Justin II's reign, Anastasia appeared only at the beginning of Tiberius' reign and generally does not feature as strongly in the material.[1143] Two epigrams on a pair of statues of an emperor and an empress probably refer to Tiberios II and Anastasia, and a 10th-century text mentions her and Tiberios in connection with the conversion of a prison into the church of the Holy 40 Martyrs and a palace called *Ta Sophias,* built in her name by her son-in-law, Emperor Maurice.[1144]

The *vita* of St. Theodore tells of his visit to Constantinople during the rule of Maurice. Upon arrival he is greeted by the patriarch, the Emperor, and the senate, after which he "sat down to a table with them. The Emperor and the Empress and all the officers of the bedchamber showed a tender regard for him and accorded him much honour."[1145] On a later occasion, having cured child, the holy man is invited to dine with the Emperor and the *augusta*.[1146] Maurice's wife Constantina was the daughter of the previous rulers, Tiberios II and Anastasia. Empress Sophia was still alive throughout the reign of Maurice and Constantina and took part in court life. Sophia was at odds with Empress Anastasia, but seemed to get on with the new Empress Constantina, and together they offered a *corona* to the Emperor at Easter.[1147] Constantina, together with the senate and the patriarch, also tried in person to influence her husband so that he would not to engage in an upcoming war.[1148] The *Patria Constantinopoleos* has her depicted among statues near the *Chalke* gate with Emperor Maurice and their children.[1149]

Phocas continued the tradition of depicting the Emperor and Empress together when he

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[1140] Corippus, *In laudem*, II:310ff.

[1141] John of Ephesus, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.6, Theophanes, *Chron.*, AM 6070 [AD 577/8]. Garland 1999, 52-4 notes that Sophia was said to have prevented Ino from entering the palace while Justin was alive and Ino's husband Tiberios was *caesar*, the heir, but at Tiberios' succession she could no longer deny the new empress her rightful position. Ino as a person is clearly less prominent in the sources than her predecessor.

[1142] See e.g. Garland 1999, 55 and plate 4, with a half-*follis* of Tiberios minted in Thessaloniki in 579.

[1143] See Brubaker & Tobler 2000, 584-5, on the continuity of the type, but a decline in the frequency of such issues.

[1144] *Anthologia Planudes* 70-71, referred to by Al. Cameron 1977, 49, 53-6, and *Patria*, III.46 & III.125.

[1145] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 82 (Maurice, AD 582-602) (translated by E. Dawes & N.H. Baynes).

[1146] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 97. See Bensammar 1976, 271, 276-8, on the title *augusta* during the late 8th to the 12th century: she notes that there could only be one official *augusta* at any time, but it did not have to be the spouse of the emperor, if such was lacking. It could be a daughter, mother or daughter-in-law. Further, *augusta* was the official title of the co-ruler, regent or sovereign. Cf. Featherstone 2008, 505, Missiou 1982, 489, and Garland 1999, 2, 4-5, on the important ceremonial function of the *augusta* and the need for one.

[1147] John of Ephesus, *Hist.Eccl*. III.7-10, III.24. Theophanes, *Chron*. 6071 [AD 578/9], 6074 [AD 581/2], 6093 [AD 600/1]. Cf. Garland 1999, 56, and Whitby 2000, 99.

[1148] Theophanes, *Chron.* 6083 [AD 590/1]. Theophylact, *Hist.* 5.16.3-4.

[1149] *Patria,* II.28 & II.89 (compiled in the 10th century).

seized the throne from Maurice. He crowned Leontia, struck copper coins embellished with joint portraits, and had statues sent to various cities. Consequently, in 603, the local senate, authorities, and clergy in Rome officially received such statues and hailed the new imperial pair.[1150] Like her predecessors Sophia and Anastasia, Leontia was meant to be saluted by the factions after her coronation as Empress, although there was a dispute between the Greens and the Blues about protocol that resulted in a skirmish during the occasion.[1151] By this time it also seems to have been customary to set up decorated portraits in the Hippodrome of the imperial family, women included, during the official games: images of Phocas' daughter Domentzia and her husband Priscus were automatically placed with the imperial ones for the horse races arranged in honour of their wedding.[1152]

The emphasis shifted slightly in the 7th century and the symmetrical portrayal of the imperial ruling couple is no longer as prominent in the sources, although the empress keeps much her presence and influence. There is also a slight decline in available source material. Emperor Heraklios' first wife Eudokia was popular, but she died early in his reign. She was given an imposing funeral, the procession passing through the city with crowds of spectators.[1153] His second wife Martina was rather unpopular, partly because of objections to the close blood relationship between them: she was his niece, the daughter of his sister Maria, which the Church, in theory, considered too close a relationship for marriage. According to reports, dissatisfaction with the marriage was also evident at the horse races in the Hippodrome, with members of both circus factions loudly voicing their protests.[1154] Although she was unpopular, she reportedly had a strong influence on her husband, standing by him in all situations. She followed him on his military campaigns in the East, spending much of her time away from the capital in the 620s, and some of their children were born during these travels outside Constantinople.[1155] Martina appears on coins standing with Heraklios and her stepson Heraklios Constantine, taking third rank by flanking the Emperor to the left.[1156] She no longer appeared on coins after 629, and no other empress did until the 780s.[1157]

As long as Emperor Heraklios was alive, Martina seemed to do everything she could to secure her own children's succession to the throne. When he died she functioned as regent for her young son Heraklios II for a while, following the death of his half-brother and co-regent Constantine

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[1150] Brubaker & Tobler 2000, 585-6, fig 7. Stratos 1968, 67.

[1151] Theophanes, *Chron*. 6094 [AD 601/2] (289), Theophylact, *Hist.* 8.10.9-10.

[1152] Theophanes, *Chron*. AM 6099 [AD 606/7] (294). The automatic presumption enraged Phocas.

[1153] Nikephoros, *Brev.* 3; *Chron. Pasch*. AD 612 [p. 702-3]; Theophanes, *Chron*. AM 6102, 6103 [AD 609/10, 610/11]. Cf. Garland 1999, 62.

[1154] Nikephoros, *Brev.* 11, and 27, reporting that even the Green faction, usually supportive of Heraklios, showed their discontent. Cf. Garland 1999, 63.

[1155] On Heraklios' marriage to Martina and her unpopularity, as well as her participation in military campaigns, see e.g. Nikephoros, *Brev*. 11, 12, 20, *Chron. Pasch*. AD 624 [p. 714], *Theophanes* AM 6105 [AD 612/13]. Cf. Garland 1999, 62-3 and Haldon 1990, 51.

[1156] Brubaker & Tobler 2000, 586-7, fig. 8. Garland 1999, 62, & plate 5, a *follis* minted at Nikomedia in 626/7. Garland remarks that on one coin in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection (minted shortly after the marriage) the figure of Martina seems to have been deliberately obliterated by some user, indicating unpopularity and disapproval.

[1157] Brubaker & Tobler 2000, 586-7. Garland 1999, 72.

III. They were both ousted in internal struggles between rival factions at court.[1158] According to Nikephoros, when Heraklios died in 641 Martina summoned the patriarch, the senate, and other dignitaries, calling an assembly of people with the intention of drawing upon the Emperor's testament to show that he had made provisions for her and her sons, arguing for priority in government for herself. Among the objections to her reign shouted from the crowd was that, as a woman, it would not be proper for her to receive foreign emissaries who arrived at the palace and to converse with them.[1159] This is interesting, given that Empress Sophia is said to have taken such functions upon herself in the previous century during Justin's illness.

After Martina, imperial consorts from the late 7th through most of the 8th century are less visible in the material. Sources such as the *Patria* have no information on any imagery of later empresses. Another example is the additional mosaics in the church of S. Apollinare in Classe at Ravenna, commissioned some time before 679. Although inspired by those of the previous century in San Vitale, they lack any female aspects. Sarah does not accompany Abraham and no imperial women accompany the images of Constans II and his sons Constantine IV, Heraclius and Tiberius.[1160] There may be several reasons for this: the smaller space for the picture scheme, the ecclesiastic event it commemorated, or that S. Apollinare in Classe was more clearly an episcopal church. Even so, the fact remains that empresses were less prominently present during this period.

Patronage of religious establishments continued to be part of the activities of an empress. The *Patria* mentions that Anna, the wife of Leo III, had commissioned a monastery on the site of the house in which she took refuges to give birth while returning to Blachernai from a pilgrimage.[1161] In another source Constantine V's third wife Eudokia is depicted accompanying him on his travels in Paphlagonia, and is present when he interviews the mother superior Anthousa, eventually making large donations to her monasteries in gratitude for the prediction of a good outcome from her difficult pregnancy.[1162]

Imperial spouses could be seen as co-rulers, and some empresses functioned as regents for their sons. However, Irene took one step further in the late 8th century, making herself the sole ruler. As a widow she first functioned as regent for her son, before taking the imperial throne as ruler in her own right for a short period between 797 and 802, acting in every way as the sovereign and in some instances presenting herself in terms usually reserved for the emperor.[1163] This was an unusual situation, on the margins of the admissible, but it was possible and might be accepted in the

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[1158] Nikephoros, *Brev*. 27-32. Theophanes, *Chron.* 621, 6132-4 [AD 628/9, 639/42]. Cf. Garland 1999, 63-72, Herrin 2001, 24-5, Haldon 1990, 51-52. Cf. Bensammar 1976, 275-6, on the title *agusta* for female regents in later centuries.

[1159] Nikephoros, *Brev.* 28. Haldon 1990, 51-52.

[1160] Deichmann 1958, Taf. 404-9, Deichmann 1969, 260, Abb. 286-7, Deichamnn 1976, 246, 273-9; Mango 1994, 115.

[1161] *Patria,* III. 251. Brubaker & Haldon 2011, 144.

[1162] *Life of St. Anthousa of Mantineon*, 18 (*SynaxCP* 850-1). Talbot (ed.) 1998, 14, 21.

[1163] Theophanes, *Chron.* 6273-82,6290-4 [780/90, 797/802], on Irene as co-ruler and ruler. She was in power for more or less 20 years. Connor 2004, 160-1, 209, Garland 1999, 73-94, Herrin 2001, 51-129, James 2009, 43-6, Lilie 1996, 205-14, 269-91. See Auzépy 1999, 235-8 on Irene's alliance with patriarch Tarasios and the Church to gather support for her rule. See Bensammar 1976, 279, 289 on Irene entitled *basileus* in a *Novella* issued while she was sole sovereign (*JGR*, I, 45), minting coins with *basilissa* whereas previously using *augusta*. Cf. Featherstone 2008, 505 on the preferred use of *aususta* for empresses instead of *basilissa*. See Burgmann 1981, 16-7, 26-7, on Irene's *novellae*.

Byzantine political system at least as a temporary exception: a female ruler was more or less unthinkable at that time in Western Mediaeval political thinking.[1164]

Even as a regent Irene is depicted on coins next to her son, the young Emperor Constantine VI, although not until the year of the Church Council in 787. She is holding the *globus cruciger* and is referred to as co-ruler.[1165] She was the one to summon patricians and some senators to hear the patriarch Paul's call for an ecumenical council to end the Iconoclasm, and later, in 784, she convened a meeting with senators, clergy and citizens in the Magnaura palace to acclaim his successor. The following year bishops were summoned to a council in the name of Emperors Constantine and Irene. In August 786 Irene sat with Constantine in the galleries of the Church of the Holy Apostles following the proceedings and ordered her guardsmen to settle some unrest among the participants. The first council was unsuccessful, but a new one was summoned in 787 in Nicaea. Even if Constantine VI was present, Irene presided over the final session in Magnaura, in the imperial palace in Constantinople, signing the documents first. After this, mother and son were acclaimed as New Constantine and New Helena.[1166] The mid-9th-century *vita* of bishop Tarasios, who preceded over the council, refers to Irene and her son Constantine VI as 'the emperors' (οἱ βασιλεῖς).[1167]

Temporarily rejected between 790 and 792 and confined to her palace after her son came of age, Irene was reinstalled as co-ruler in 792 and had her son deposed in 797, taking over as sole ruler until her own dethronement in 802.[1168] Even in the early 790s, when she was deposed as regent, Constantine still struck coins that including her portrait and name, but now she was portrayed without holding the orb. In 792 and for the following five years her bust figure appears on the obverse of the *solidi* with her official title 'Irene Augusta', while Constantine stands on the reverse with the title *basileus*. After dethroning Constantine in 797, Irene struck gold coins with her figure on both sides, now for the first time entitled *Eirene basilissa,* pronouncing her the sole ruler. She wears a robe akin to the consular dress of an emperor, and she again holds the orb in her hand.[1169] Theophanes describes a procession from the Church of the Holy Apostles on Easter Monday 799, led by patricians with Irene riding in a golden chariot drawn by four white horses, scattering gold coins among the people.[1170]

[1164] Cf. Talbot 1997, 140-1, Herrin 1984, 184-5. Garland 1999, 34-35, 87, referring to the queen Amalasuntha (6th century) notes that among the Goths, kingship could not be held by a woman. See Neil 2013b, 115 on powerful empresses and how Byzantine attitudes to a female ruler was built up during previous centuries.

[1165] Brubaker & Tobler 2000, 587, Brubaker & Haldon 2001, 124, Haldon & Brubaker 2011, 265-6, 352-5.

[1166] *Vita Tarasii*, §§ 12-16, 25-30 [Heikkel (ed.) p. 397-8, 404]. Theophanes, *Chron.* 6276-80 [AD 783/8]. Garland 1999, 78-80, Herrin 2001, 1-2, 83-9, Brubaker & Haldon 2011, 275-6, and Neil 2013b, 116. Cf. Herrin 2001, 1-2. This was the 7th council among the recognised ecumenical councils.

[1167] *Vita Tarasii* §§ 9, 11-12, 27, 30. Cf. Brubaker & Haldon 2011, 276.

[1168] Theophanes, *Chron*. 6282, 6290, 6295 [AD 789/90, 797/8, 802/3]. Garland 1999, 82-3, 86-9, Herrin 2001, 92-5, 100–1, 113-7, 126-8, and Brubaker & Haldon 2011, 286-94.

[1169] Garland 1999, 2, 76, 83, 87, & plate 7, with *solidus* of Irene minted in Constantinople in 797-802. Herrin 2001, 75-6, 100. Brubaker & Tobler 2000, 587-90, figs. 9-12. See Brubaker & Haldon 2001, 123-4. Neil 2013b, 128. Bensammar 1976, 250-84, 289, on the use of *basilissa* and *augusta* for empresses. Missiou 1982, 489-95, *basilissa* originally the spouse of the emperor and *augusta* a separate honour including a crowning, noting the partial interchangeability of the two after around AD 629. Cf. See Featherstone 2008, 505 on the preferred use of *augusta* instead of *basilissa*, even after the early 7th century.

[1170] Theophanes, *Chron*. 6291 [AD 798/9]. Garland 1999, 88. Cf. Nikephoros, *Brev*. 87, describes the crowning of

After the reconquests of areas north of Thessaloniki occupied by Slavs, Irene ceremonially visited Thrace with her son in May 784. Among the activities that followed was the rebuilding and renaming of Beroia as Irenoupolis.[1171] She seems to have been involved in the construction of the Hagia Sophia church in Thessaloniki, which is dated by the monograms of Constantine and Irene.[1172] A monastery on the largest of Prince's islands in the Sea of Marmara, which Theophanes' wife entered after the couple took monastic vows around 780 and where Irene was first exiled in 802 and eventually also buried, was possibly one of her own building projects.[1173] Likewise, she built the palace of Eleutherios for herself, and was involved in donation and restoration work, including the church of the Virgin of the Source and St. Loukas, where the poor could be buried without charge. She is also mentioned as having built charitable establishments such as homes for old people, hostels and alms houses, a hospice, a cemetery and a bakery for the poor.[1174]

The role of the empress in earlier centuries was largely that of a spouse and the mother of the imperial children. A progressive change in her symbolic and actual position had taken place by the 6th century. She ceased to be merely the imperial spouse and gained a place as the other half in what comprised the ruling imperial couple.[1175] Through this augmented position she was influential even after the death of the emperor, as Herrin notes: imperial widows seemed to have extended their power from around 600 AD onwards.[1176]

In appraising the sources one may reflect on Talbot's statement: "While '*philanthropia*' was but one of many admirable traits in an emperor, for an empress it was one of the few ways in which she could make an impact on the lives of her subjects."[1177] She retreats from this rather general supposition to some extent in a later article, admitting that empresses were among the few women who might be involved in the political arena.[1178] The political arena does not, of course, equate to the life of the subjects. Nevertheless, although the emperor's political and administrative powers were greater and more official than the empress's, it was generally in the enactment of laws, taxation and the instigation of military campaigns that he might have an impact the lives of his subjects in ways that the empress could not. It is difficult to imagine other ways in which an emperor could have an effect on the lives of common people that the empress could not share. It is more likely that the imperial couple had little impact on the day-to-day existence of most of their subjects. Their

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Constantine V's second wife Eudokia as *augusta,* and of her two older sons as *caesar*, after which there is an imperial procession to the cathedral during which money was distributed to the gathered crowed.

[1171] Theophanes, *Chron*. AM 6275 [AD 782/3]. Garland 1999, 76-7, and Herrin 2001, 81.

[1172] Garland 1999, 93, Herrin 2001, 82, 261, Brubaker & Haldon 2011, 145, 310.

[1173] Theophanes, *Chron*. 6295 [AD 802/3] (478, 480). Brubaker & Haldon 2011, 297.

[1174] Theophanes, *Chron*. 6283, 6295 [AD 790/1, 802/3] (467, 478). Patria III.85, III.142, III.173. See also Brubaker & Haldon 2011, 310-1. Lilie 1996, 144-5. Cf. Garland 1999, 93. See Foss 2002, 148 note 29, noting that the *Patria* is a late-10th-century source with a reputation of being unreliable.

[1175] Cf. Garland 1999, 2, noting that only from the 6th century was it common to grant the title *agusta* to wives of emperors: it was a rare practice before that.

[1176] Herrin 1984, 184-5. Cf. Missiou 1982, 489-90.

[1177] Talbot 1994, 106. Bosch 1982, 499, contends that all Byzantine empresses, from Constantin I's mother Helena to Helena Dragas, held a more or less important position, not only regarding affairs of state, but also in the ecclesiastic, cultural and social life of the Empire.

[1178] Talbot 1997, 140-1.

impact in the capital was related mainly to their presence, their ceremonial functions, their philanthropic enterprises and donations, receiving supplications for assistance and their political activities. In these matters the opportunities of the empress resembled those of the emperor, although the means and occasions differed. The empress was considered the other half of a ruling couple, with somewhat of an official position that potentially gave her considerable political power and influence. She is frequently portrayed in 6th century art in a symmetrical position next to the emperor and literary sources depict her as participating at his side in official events or parallel ceremonial activities, and as an active political player. The position of the empress cannot, of course, be fully compared with that of the emperor. After all, Byzantine society was male-dominated. Nevertheless, female imperial visibility had a certain prominence.[1179]

B. Women of high rank

There were other imperial ladies in powerful positions with political influence, although possibly not as prominently as the spouse of the ruling emperor. Daughters, sisters, mothers and other close female relatives became involved in politics, siding with different parties in internal conflicts and power struggles, and their influence and opinions were taken into consideration.[1180] Their personas conveyed imperial power, although to a lesser extent than that of the empress.

Imperial power was not automatically hereditary in Byzantium, but it was symbolically transmitted through those who were connected to the imperial throne. Imperial heritage thus gave those concerned a strong position in terms of accession. This consignment of imperial power in members of the imperial household could also be transmitted over the female line: marriage to an imperial princess brought the husband nearer the throne. If the emperor lacked a male heir to promote as successor, imperial power could be transmitted through marriage with his daughter or his widow.[1181]

Ariadne, through her second marriage, promoted the succession of Anastasius as Emperor.[1182] Even if a son existed, marriage to a princess gave the spouse a high position, usually a high office, and in troubled times he might attempt to seize imperial power: Artabazos, married to Leo III's daughter and the brother-in-law to Constantine V, made such an attempt.[1183] In earlier centuries most princesses married inside the Roman Empire. The practice of using their marriages

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[1179] Cf. Herrin 2001, 19-20, Herrin 2013, 164-6, on empresses commemorated in public statues.

[1180] From previous centuries, Helena, mother of Constantine I, and Pulcheria, sister of Theodosius II, are the best known. Cf. e.g. Garland 1999, 3-4, 54-7, 65-72, 76-85, and Talbot 1997, 140-1.

[1181] Tiberius' daughter Constantina was married to his chosen successor Maurice, Evagrius, *Hist. Eccl*. V.22, VI.1 [217, 222], Theophylact, *Hist.* 1.1. However, when requested on Justin II's death to marry either the widow Sophia or her widowed daughter Arabia, Tiberius had already been adopted as *caesar* and heir by Justin, and with his position secure he refused to divorce his wife for marriage with a woman of the house of the previous emperor, John of Ephesus, *Hist. Eccl*. 3.6-7, Theophanes, *Chron*. AM 6070 [AD 577/8]. Cf. Talbot 1997, 140-1, Garland 1999, 3, 53-54,56, 84, 90, Herrin 2001, 23, and Herrin 2013, 195.

[1182] E.g. Herrin 2013, 174, 195.

[1183] Nikephoros, *Brev*. 64-6. Cf. Procopius, *Bell*. 7.31.2-16, on the Armenian general Artabanes who hoped to marry the widowed niece of Justinian I, Preïecta, and so get closer to the imperial throne and power.

to forge alliances with foreign powers developed later. Heraklios made an attempt to offer his daughter Eudokia (also named Epiphania) in marriage to the Khagan of the Turks around the year 629, but the Khagan died before it could take place, and Justinian II is said to have promised his daughter to the lord of the Bulgarians in an attempt to get help to reclaim his rule after his dethronement.[1184] Even if these marriages never took place, it is clear that by the time Nikephoros was writing, marrying imperial princesses to foster political alliances or to pacify neighbours was considered an option. Political marriage alliances were nothing new in themselves, and prestige could also be transmitted in the other direction. Phocas, who rose to power after political upheaval at the beginning of the 7th century and lacked secure dynastic claims, arranged the marriage of his daughter Domenzia to Priscos, who was around 60 years old but a representative of the old aristocracy. His aim was to secure his connection with the highest strata of Byzantine society and to appease any objections from that direction.[1185] Sons were also married off in connection with political alliances. Emperor Maurice had his son Thodosios marry the daughter of the patrician Germanus, and the marriages of two sons of Emperor Heraklios had political significance.[1186] The power invested in women close to the throne and the political threat they could pose were evidenced when the usurping Emperor Phocas not only killed his predecessor Maurice, but also had Maurice's wife and daughters imprisoned in a convent and later put to death with the wife of their son Theodoros, his aim being to assure that no plot threatening his rule was instigated through use of the prestige of these women representing the previous reign.[1187]

Princesses born in the purple, in other words during the Emperor's reign, could be crowned *augustae* in splendid ceremonies.[1188] Heraklios' daughter Epiphaneia, from his first marriage, was made *augusta* at one year of age in 612, under the name Eudokia. Following a ceremony in the palace she was seated in a chariot and escorted to Hagia Sophia [1189] According to Herrin, the court needed a nominal empress following his wife's death, which later would have caused a problem when he married Martina and made her Empress.[1190] This argument is not all together convincing, however, in that two of his daughters with her, Augustina and Martina, received a similar honour around the time their brothers Heraklonas and David were made *caesares* (the title of junior male co-rulers), possibly in 639.[1191] A small illustration found in the margin of a manuscript might portray

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[1184] Nikephoros, *Brev.* 12, 18, 23, 42-43. Cf. Garland 1999, 255 note 5.

[1185] Theophanes, *Chron.* 6099 [AD 606/7]. Cf. Stratos 1968, 75.

[1186] Theophanes, *Chron.* 6094 [AD 601/2]. Heraklios had his son Theodoros married to Nike, the daughter of Niketas, son of Sarbatos of Persia, and his eldest son Constantine to Gregoria, the daughter of his cousin Niketas, Nikephoros, *Brev.* 5, 17. Cf. Herrin 2001, 56-7, 78-80, 117-8.

[1187] Gregory the Monk, *Chron*. 662-4, Theophanes, *Chron.* 6098-9 [AD 605/7], Nikephoros, *Brev*. 2, Theophylact, *Hist.* 8.15, *Chron. Pasch*, AD 603, 605 [p. 695-7]. Dawns & Baynes 1948, 196, Herrin 2006, 3.

[1188] Heraklios (610-41), Theophilos (829-42), Leo VI (886-912) and Manuel I (1143-80) made their daughters *augustae*, while Constantine the Great (324-37) had given this honour to his mother Helena. See e.g. Garland 1999, 2. Missiou 1982, 494-5 and note 51.

[1189] Theophanes, *Chron.* AM 6104 [AD 611/12], *Chron. Pasch.* AD 612 [p.703, 2-3]. Garland 1999, 62.

[1190] Herrin 2013, 176, 221.

[1191] Nikephoros, *Brev.* 27; Constantinos Porhphyrogenitos, *De ceremonii* II 29 (II. 630.5-9). The oldest, Heraklios Constantine, had been made *caesar* earlier and was invested also with some actual imperial power, see Nikephoros, *Brev*. 5, 25. Missiou 1982, 497 note 51. Garland 1999, 64.

Heraklios accompanied by the three daughters crowned *augustae,* or two of them with his wife Martina.[1192]

Daughters of emperors could play an active part in various celebrations. When the relics of the 4th-century saint Euphemia were returned to the capital in 796, Emperor Constantine VI's two young daughters Irene and Euphrosyne were present at the ceremony distributing parts of the saint's body to notables.[1193] Among the official recipients of the relics may have been another royal princess, the emperor's aunt, daughter of Constantin V and Eudokia, who had been leading a monastic life.[1194] Although it was a religious event, it also had political connotations as a visible stand against previous iconoclastic imperial policies. Sophia's and Justin's married daughter Arabia is described in Corippus' poem as accompanying her mother back to the palace after a church visit for prayer before the coronation ceremonies, and he pays homage to her with a lengthy description is given of her beauty.[1195] Arabia is also honoured with statues in Constantinople, one at the Milion in a group with Sophia and other imperial persons, and another in the harbour of Sophiae.[1196]

Mothers of emperors had an honoured position regardless of whether or not they had been empresses during the previous rein. Justin II's mother Vigilantia also had imperial prominence as the sister of Emperor Justinianus I. Her image is possibly one in the group of statues in the harbour of Sophiae, including Arabia with the imperial couple.[1197] Although the statue may not be of her, she does features in a prominent position in Corippus' text. She is mentioned in the *praefatio* and in the introduction, in which she, rather than any Muses, is evoked for inspiration for the whole poem, together with the Empress Sophia. She is also alluded to allegorically in a couple of other places in the text.[1198] Narrated disrespectfulness of the Emperor's mother could also serve to underline the harsh and cruel character of a man. Nikephoros claims that the eunuch Stephen the Persian, appointed treasurer by Justinian II in the late 7th century, as well as displaying cruelty to those under him had the audacity to whip the Emperor's mother like a school teacher chastising a pupil. This

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[1192] Neapel, Biblioteca Nazionale, *Cod. (Copt.) I, B. 18,* fol. 4 v, see Gerstinger 1931, Taf. XXII, fig. 116, and Spatharakis 1976, 14-20 & fig. 5. The illustration depicts Job & his daughters, but imperial portraits were used as a model, presumably Heraklios & family. Cf. Kurz 1942-3, 162-4, who questioned the assumed direct connection to the imperial family.

[1193] Theophanes, *Chron.* AM 6258 [AD 765/6]. Constantine of Tios, chapter 15-6 [Halkin 1965, 103-5], who further mentions a daughter of the iconophile general Artabasdos and other nobility. Garland 1999, 85.

[1194] Talbot (ed.) 1998, 21 n. 3, and 23. *SynexCP* 613, according to which she refused to marry and after her father's death distributed her inheritance to the poor, churches and pious institutions, and led a monastic life.

[1195] Corippus, *In laud.* II:70-83. On Arabia's name and her already being married, see e.g. Cameron 1976, 133-4 comment to line 106, and 154 comment to line 72f. Cf. Garland 1999, 40-1.

[1196] *Paras. syn. chron*., 35. Cameron & Herrin 1984, 95. *Patria,* II.30, II.62, III.37. Cameron 1976, 134 comment to line 106, and 154 comment to line 72f. Cameron 1980, 70-71. Garland 1999, 48. Cf. *Cod. Par. gr.* 1447, fol.258, describes an image in the Blachernae church of Ariadne, the daughter of Leo I (457-74), with her imperial parents and her son Leo gathered around the throne of the Virgin, Cameron 1976, 129.

[1197] *Patria,* II.62, III.37. The other version names the chamberlain Narses as the fourth statue. Cameron 1976, 134 comment to line 106, see also 121 on Vigilantia's family background. Cameron 1980,70-71.

[1198] Corippus, *In laud.* Praefatio:21-26, I:6-13. On Vigilantia's position as a 'veiled' patron with Sophia, see Cameron 1976, 2, 119, 121, 127, 131, 184-5, 200. Criticised by Speck 2003b, 53, who sees these as mere personifications of abstract ideas.

also reflected badly on the Emperor who had appointed such a cruel man.[1199] Even if the story may be fabricated, it reveals that behaviour expected towards an emperor's female family was that of respect.

Sisters of an emperor and their families also played a part in the political arena. Heraklios sent his nephew Stephen, son of his sister Maria, as hostage to the Avars together with his own illegitimate son and some other people, to secure an armistice. This was later broken and Maria put up the ransom money to get her son from the Avars, instigating the process to free also other hostages.[1200] Having the Emperor's sister as a godmother was also beneficial. One reason why Heraklios favoured a man called Pyrrhus when a new patriarch for Constantinople was under consideration was that he considered him almost a brother, his sister having received him in her arms during his baptismal.[1201] Philippikos, Emperor Maurice's brother-in-law through his sister Gordia, achieved a high military position and a court office partly because of this relationship.[1202] Twice in the 6th century the throne passed from uncle to nephew: Justin I was succeeded by his sister's son Justinian I, who in turn was succeeded by the son of his sister Vigilantia, Justin II.

High birth was a matter of pride and women did not shy from displaying self-esteem or flaunting imperial ancestry. A good example is Anicia Juliana, a lady who was connected to the retreating imperial dynasty but was still able to intimidate Justinian, the ruler of the new dynasty, mostly through her building activities and patronage. Modern scholars have discussed the possible competition between Anicia Juliana and Justinian. The massive scale of the Hagia Sophia church, built by the Emperor, may in part have been a response meant to overshadow this high-ranking lady's grand building activities, especially the church of St. Polyeuktos, which had been the most grandiose church in the capital for over a decade.[1203]

Anicia Juliana was visibly proud of her imperial heritage, exhibited in inscribed epigrams decorating churches she had built or restored.[1204] A poem about the church of St. Euphemia of Olybrius is illustrative:

> I am the House of the Trinity, and three generations built me.
> First Eudoxia, the daughter of Theodosius,
> having escaped from war and barbarians,
> erected and dedicated me to God in acknowledgement of her rescue from distress.

[1199] Nikephoros, *Brev*. 39. The mother's name was Anastasia, Nikephoros, *Brev*. 45. Cf. Theodoros, *Chron.* 6186 [693/4]. On eunuchs in Byzantine court and society, see Ringrose 2003, *passim*.

[1200] Nikephoros, *Brev*. 13, 21.

[1201] Nikephoros, *Brev*. 26.

[1202] Theophanes, *Chron*. 6086 [AD 593/4], 6094 [AD 601/2], and Theophylact, *Hist.* 1.13.

[1203] Anicia Juliana's fame, her church building and the antagonism with Justinian even inspired an anecdote in Gregory of Tours' *De Gloria Martyrum* (*Patrologia Latina* 71, 793-5). S. Runciman's foreword to Harrison 1989, 9, & the text itself, 137-9. Withby 2006, 159-60, 184-5. Garland 1999, 19, discusses Anicia Juliana's possible resentment of the 'upstarts' Justinian & Theodora. Cf. Connor 1999, 502, 510-5, Kiilerich 2001, 182-6.

[1204] Preserved in *Anthologia Graeca* are e.g. *Anth. Gr.* I:10 related to the church of St. Polyeuktos, and *Anth. Gr.* I:12, 14-17, all related to the church of St. Euphemia of Olybrius. Cf. Talbot 1997, 135-6, Garland 1999, 19, Withby 2006, *passim*, and James 2007, 189-91.

> Next her daughter Placidia with her most blessed husband adorned me.
> Thirdly, if perchance my beauty was at all deficient in splendour,
> munificent Juliana invested me with it in memory of her parents,
> and bestowed the height of glory on her mother and father
> and her mother's illustrious mother by augmenting my former adornment.
> Thus was I made.[1205]

Anicia Juliana was the only child of Olybrius, who for a brief time was Emperor in the west in 472, and Placidia, the daughter of Valentinian III and Eudoxia, who in turn was the daughter of Theodosius II.[1206] She therefore had plenty of imperial heritage to be proud of. What is interesting is the emphasis on female ancestors in the poem.[1207] It is clearly the female lineage that is underlined, although one reason for this could be the interest that her mother and grandmother had had in the same church and the fact that it was dedicated to a female saint. Her father Olybrius is only mentioned in passing in connection with his wife Placidia, who from a dynastic perspective could be considered more prominent in terms of connecting Anicia Juliana with Emperors Valentinian III and Theodosius II. The long epigram incorporated into the decoration of the church of St. Polyeuctos underlines all of Anicia Juliana's ancestry with a strong emphasis on imperial connotations and depicts her through her building achievements almost as a 'New Constantine' or a 'New Solomon'.[1208]

The region itself in which St. Polyeuctos stood had strong connections to the Theodosian dynasty of the 5th century. The area along the northern branch of Mese, the main street, was called Constantinae and was the centre of an aristocratic neighbourhood in the 4th to the 6th centuries. It was dotted with palaces and houses that had belong to imperial women, and many of which Anicia Juliana probably had inherited. Her own palace[1209] was almost next door to St. Polyeuctos. Several of her building and renovation projects concerned property in the area originally belonging to her female ancestors. She therefore had a strong presence in a very visible part of Constantinople along the important processional route that went to the imperial burial church of the Holy Apostles.[1210]

Anicia Juliana was present in public space through inscriptions, investments and patronage. She was among the prominent patrons of her time, enabled by her personal wealth and social

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[1205] *Anth. Gr.* I:12 (transl. by W.R. Patton, 1948-60).

[1206] E.g. Talbot 1997, 135-6, Garland 1999, 19, and Kiilerich 2001, 172-3, 176, 181-2. Furthermore, Anicia Juliana's son Olybrius, who was consul in 491, had married Emperor Anastasios' niece Irene. See Mathisen 2012, 159-60, 163-4, on Anicia Juliana's connections through marriage to Ostrogoth royalty. See Nichanian 2012, 359-61, on Anicia Juliana's marriage and the importance of the aristocratic Anicii family.

[1207] Cf. Brubaker 1997, 56-7.

[1208] *Anth. Gr.* I:10. Connor 1999, 486, 488, 503, Kiilerich 2001, 181-186, Withby 2006, 165-8. Milner 1994, 73-7: it was the Temple of Ezekiel rather than of Salomon that Anicia Juliana tried to emulate. Her great-grandmother Galla Placidia emphasised important connections in her church commission in Ravenna, Brubaker 1997, 53-4.

[1209] On possible archaeological remnants, see Tunay 2001, 228.

[1210] Magdalino 2001, 55-60, 65, 68. The church of St. Polyeuctos was evidently also visited by procession in the Middle Byzantine period. On processional routes in Constantinople, see Berger 2001, 86-7.

rank.[1211] Imperial ladies commonly functioned as patrons of churches and monasteries.[1212] This had ideological significance in that, as role models, they exhibited their piety through ecclesiastical patronage and other activities such as pilgrimage. Pilgrimage was particularly intense in the earlier centuries, examples including Theodosius II's sister Pulcheria and Constantin the Great's mother Helena, but it continued into the 6th century.

Other ladies of rank also enjoyed influence and visibility. Depending on their wealth, status and capacity, women of the nobility could participate in political networks of the aristocracy, particularly of the senatorial class but also including others with wealth or prestige. Wives shared the status of their husbands: according to the law, the wife of a consul shared his rank and esteem and could wear insignia and clothing signifying this rank.[1213] Legal texts rank the wife of a consul with her husband in a similar way as the empress was ranked with the emperor. Wives of noblemen joined their husbands at public functions. Nikephoros recalls how husbands and wives co-functioned as godparents at the baptism of converted Hunnic nobility, and Theophanes tells of wives accompanying the noblemen meeting Irene upon her arrival in Constantinople as the fiancée of Leo IV.[1214]

Procopius indicates that some wives of high-ranking men were affiliated with political events. In addition to Empress Theodora, he also devotes attention in his narrative to her friend Antonina, the wife of general Belisarius. Other female members of the elite are also mentioned. At the time of the *Nika* riot in 532 the rioters seized Hypatios from his house to crown him Emperor. Procopius tells of Hypatios' wife Mary, who had a reputation for being a gentle and prudent woman, lamenting loudly and asking her kinsmen to help. She beseeched the crowd to let her husband go, as they were leading him to his peril, but she was overpowered by the assembled throng of people.[1215] According to Procopius, Euphemia, the daughter of the *praetorian prefect* John the Cappadocian, was recruited by Antonina under false pretences to persuade her father to join in a *coup d'état*, which then discredited him in the eyes of the Emperor.[1216] The text conveys the impression that women of the nobility were involved in political events to some degree.

A visual expression of such political connections is found in the mosaics in San Vitale depicting women of the nobility and Empress Theodora's closest entourage (Fig. 7a). According to Irian Andreescu-Treadgold and Warren Treadgold, the closest retinue around the imperial couple are Belisarius and Theodora's grandson Anastasius, standing next to Justinian, and Belisarius' wife Antonina and her daughter Joannina, Anastasius' newly betrothed fiancé, standing next to Theodora.

[1211] Cf. Connor 1999, 482-3, 502-4, 507-8, and Withby 2006, 165. See Nichanian 2012, 359-61 on the aristocratic family of Anicii.

[1212] Cf. Talbot 1997, 135-6.

[1213] Beaucamp 1990, 271-2. Cf. Delbrueck 1929, 54-6.

[1214] Nikephoros, *Brev.* 9, Theophanes, *Chron.* 6261 [768/9]. Cf. Herrin 2001, 52, depicting Irene's arrival as a colourful and public affair attended by the nobility and watched by crowds of common people.

[1215] Procopius *Bell.* 1.24, Mary is mentioned in 1.24.22-24. *Chron. Pasch.,* (AD 531) [p. 620-5] mentions Hypatios, but not his wife. He was the nephew of the former Emperor Anastasios, see e.g. Garland 1999, 32. Procopius, *Bell.* 1.24.33-8, has his famous rendering of Empress Theodora speech in which she persuades the Emperor and his court not to flee during the riot, but to stay and fight for the imperial throne.

[1216] Procopius, *Bell.* 1.25.13-30. Garland 1999, 34.

The close connection of the Byzantine commander of Italy and his family to the imperial couple is thereby conveyed to the audience in Ravenna.[1217]

Nobility and wealth gave women certain access to the public sphere. One woman of the aristocracy named Patricia was even city governor of Antaiopolis in Egypt in 553, although she might have had a male co-governor who could perform duties in public on her behalf.[1218]

Women of high rank also feature in religious narratives such as the *vita* of St. Matrona of Perge, some of which are mentioned above in various contexts.[1219] The heroine claimed high social rank, her husband Dometianos being called an illustrious man of the emperor's suit.[1220] Similarly several high-ranking women feature in the *vita* of St. Theodore of Sykeon.[1221] Whereas many other women in these texts remain anonymous and are referred to only by their social position, these noble women are often mentioned by name and family connection.

Wealth and rank also gave access to public space. Some of the 6th-century mosaics in the church of St. Demetrios in Thessaloniki have strong female connotations. One cycle depicts women presenting a young girl to the saint and the Virgin Mary (Fig. 11).[1222] There is no clear evidence, but it may be that these mosaics were commissioned by female members of the city elite.

Visual impressions are effective and have an impact on people, which was equally well understood in ancient society as it is by modern politicians using media for their own purposes. One way in which persons who aspired for prestige and influence could make an impact on the surrounding community was through patronage and the commissioning of different forms of art, including architecture. Art has always been used for political purposes, no less so in the early Byzantine Empire.[1223] It comprised everything from architecture to representative art and small objects, including coins, literature and book illuminations.

Women, like men of rank, used the opportunity art gave them to impress the minds of the

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[1217] W. Deichmann 1958, Taf. 358, 360-1. Andreescu-Treadgold & Treadgold 1997, 719-21.

[1218] *P.Lond*. V 1660, *P.Cairo Masp*. I 67060. Sarris 2006, 105, 108, 110, 113, Ruffini 2008, 191-2, 195, Ruffini 2011, 420. Brubaker 2005, 438. Martindale (ed.) 1992, 970.

[1219] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge,* chapter 13: Matrona's husband, pretending to be a devotee, sends a message to her through some noblewomen applying for an audience. Chapter 26: Matrona travels from Beirut to Constantinople with the mother of the ex-Prefect Elias and the mother of a *Scholasticus*. Chapters 32-6: Empress Verina is said to have visited Matrona, and Euphemia, the wife of former Emperor Anthemius in the West, is called her acquaintance, through which the patrician lady Antiochiane, the wife of the patrician Sphorakios, is introduced to her. Antiochane donates one of her estates to Matrona's small congregation of nuns. See Chapter 38 on two sisters of noble birth, one named Athanasia who eventually leaves her husband and enters Matrona's convent bringing with her generous donations (chapter 39- 47). See Chapter III.B, 125.

[1220] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge,* chapter 14.

[1221] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon,* chapter 82: the Empress accompanies Emperor Maurice and high dignitaries to greet Theodore upon his arrival in the capital. Chapters 89-90: the *silentiarios* Mannas and his wife Theodora are visited by Theodore in Constantinople. Chapter 110: two ladies of senatorial rank from Ephesus travel with their sick children to visit him. Chapter 140: Theodore is asked to visit the patrician and *curopalates* Domnitzioulos, where he blesses his childless wife Eirene. See above, Chapters III.B, 119-20, V.A, 181.

[1222] E.g. Cormack 1969, Plates 3-5, 7-9, Brubaker 2004b, 63-4, 72-5, 76-8, 86, Fig. 3-5. See also, Chapter III, 121, 129.

[1223] Cf. Cormack 1985, 49 on the role of images for the perceptions of the population. See Maguire 2007, 156-7 on political aspects of mosaics in the mid-6th-century church of Eufrasius, Poreč, Istria. Cf. Milinović 2000, *passim*.

general public or to affirm their personal status. Anicia Juliana is an good example.[1224] Not only has evidence of her patronage survived, it has given scholars reason to discuss the political propaganda battle between her and Emperor Justinian through their respective church-building activities.[1225] There is every reason to assume from the preserved material that there was more to this lady's involvement in ecclesiastical projects than the mere pious wish to be a good Christian. One of the early illustrated codex manuscripts to survive belonged to Anicia Juliana. It is a copy, usually dated around 512, of the first-century doctor Dioscurides' treatise *De Materia Medica*. One of the frontispieces is an illustration of Anicia Juliana flanked by female personifications of Magnanimity and Prudence. In front of her is a winged *putto* holding an open book with the text "Desire of the Woman devoted to Building" and another small figure is bowing deeply in front of her marked with the label "Gratitude of the Arts". An epigram around the picture frame further underlines these aspects.[1226] Carolyn Connor suggests that the book was commissioned by Anicia Juliana, whereas in the view of other scholars such as Ioannis Spatharakis and Bente Kiilerich the epigram in the frame of the illustration indicates that it was a gift from grateful inhabitants of Honoratae, where Anicia Juliana had financed the building of a church.[1227] Kiilerich, however, refers to the underlined imperial symbolism and does not exclude a strong correlation with Anicia Juliana's own wishes regarding self-representation in the commission.[1228] In any case, the image on the frontispiece shows that being a patron of the arts and a builder were significant aspects of Anicia Juliana's public image that she wanted to promote and to have acknowledged.

A female marble portrait now situated in The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York is of interest in this context. The bust is of somewhat uncertain providence, but it is claimed to have been found in Istanbul and is usually dated to the Justinian period or the late 5th to the early 6th centuries.[1229] To have such a portrait made was costly and therefore afforded only by prominent individuals. This one is also of remarkably good quality, with regard both to the marble used and the craftsmanship. The scroll held in the figure's right hand is also indicative of a patrician status. Although it is difficult to compare sculpture and book illumination, the marble portrait with its simple rounded hairstyle shows similarity with the picture of Anicia Juliana on the frontispiece of the manuscript, holding a diptych in her left hand to signify her rank.[1230] Anicia Juliana is therefore a plausible subject of the portrait in the Metropolitan Museum, and were that the case it would be further evidence of her patronage of the arts and of her prominence in society.[1231]

[1224] Cf. McCormick 2000, 161, on prestigious expenditure for the sake of visibility in the capital Constantinople.

[1225] Harrison 1989, 9, 137-9, Talbot 1997, 135-6, Garland 1999, 19, Connor 1999, 502, 510-5, Kiilerih 2001, 178, 181-6, Connor 2004, 96, 106-115, and Brubaker 2005, 439-41. On Anicia Juliana's ecclesiastical patronage, see e.g. Chapters III.C, 128, V.B, 189.

[1226] *Cod.Vindob.Med.Gr.* 1, fol. 6 v. Translated by Connor 1999, 507-9 & Appendix IV & fig. 5. Kiilerich 2001, 169-73, Connor 2004, 110 & Pl. 5, McClanan 2002, 98, & Fig. 4.2, and Spatharakis 1976, 146-7, & Fig. 95.

[1227] Connor 2004, 111, Spatharakis 1976, 147, Kiilerich 2001, 171-2, Brubaker 2010, 34, 39.

[1228] Kiilerich 2001, 173-81, 185-6.

[1229] Inan & Alföldi-Rosenbaum 1979, 335, catalogue no. 335, Taf. 268.

[1230] See Delbrueck 1929, 3-6, 10-11 on the diptych in the left hand in Anicia Juliana's portrait as a symbol of her patrician rank, while also noting that Codicilli Patricii were usually scrolls and depicted as such.

[1231] Martin Harrison, the excavator of Anicia Juliana's church of St. Polyeuktos, also mentioned this possibility:

Anicia Juliana's pride in her imperial heritage, which is revealed in several inscriptions and epigrams related to churches she either built or renovated, is discussed above.[1232] She was symbolically present through her patronage and the publicly displayed inscriptions telling of her investments and noble blood that constantly reminded people of her rank and heritage. She was a prominent figure in the society of the capital, and in some ways a contender to the *homo novus* Justinian, who could not boast a similarly impressive imperial lineage.[1233]

The patronage of Empress Theodora also had its symbolic and political connotations. Part of her church buildings and donations were for the benefit of the Monophysites, the side with which she sympathised in the theological controversies of the time. A cross with pearls was donated to Jerusalem, and another decorated with gold and precious stones was given to a Monophysite shrine in Sergiopolis. The Persian ruler Chosroes I carried off the latter during an invasion, but it was later returned as a gesture of goodwill by Chosroes II, one of his successors.[1234] This is indicative of the symbolic significance as well as the political use of religious objects of art. The mosaics in San Vitale in Ravenna carry in a similar way much symbolism. The small image of the Three Magi depicted on the lower part of Theodora's decorative *chlamys* symbolically connects to the Empress as a giver of precious gifts.[1235] Empress Irene reconstructed the church of St. Euphemia of Chalcedon and arranged for the restitution of her relics to Constantinople in 796, on which occasion parts of them were distributed among the nobility. These were not only pious acts but also political statements underlining her iconophile sentiments and pursuit of popularity.[1236]

The Trier ivory illustrates similar construction work and transference of relics (Fig. 8b). It depicts a procession led by an emperor and court officials followed by two bishops on a carriage with a reliquary, approaching a church in front of which an empress is standing. Opinions among scholars are divided as to the identification of the depicted emperor and empress. Delbroeck points out that builders are still working on the church and the empress is positioned as receiving the procession, suggesting she has commissioned a new church. He dates the ivory, based on the artistic details, in the 7th century, suggesting that the emperor was Justinian II during his first reign.[1237]

Harrison 1998, 36. Cf. Alchermes 2005, 348-9, and Fig. xv.

[1232] *Anth.Gr.* I:10 (St. Polyeuktos), *Anth.Gr.* I:12, 14-17 (St. Euphemia of Olybrius). See 189-90 & II.B, 66.

[1233] Cf. Connor 1999, 502, 508-15, Kiilerich 2001, 178, 181-6, Withby 2006, 183-4. On Justinian's attempts to create a new elite, see e.g. Cameron 1981, *passim*, and Scott 2012b, 10.

[1234] See Malalas, *Chron*. 17.19 [423], on the cross sent to Jerusalem. See Evagrius, *Hist. Eccl.* IV.28 [176], VI.21 [235], on the cross sent to Sergiopolis. Foss 2002, 148-9.

[1235] Deichmann 1958, Abb. 103, 133, 358, 360, 367, Deichmann 1976, 181. See Barber 1990, 36 on the Magi on Theodora's *chalmys* as a sign of her royal status and an unofficial counterpart of the golden *tablion* signifying public office on Justinian's garment, and further as a reference to the imperial donation of the chalice and patin held by the imperial couple, similar to the gifts of the Magi. Cormack 2000d, 60-2, also sees exegetical and eschatological symbolism. Cameron 1976, 140. See Deichmann 1969, 113, Abb. 122, 151, and Deichmann 1974, 150 on the sarcophagus of Isaacius in San Vitale, which has a relief of the Three Magi, as has a reliquary in *Museo archivescovile*. See von Simson 1948, 36, 88-95, 103 (pl. 34, 45b & d), on the use of the Magi in Ravenna and in early Christian decoration. The Veneration of the Magi was popular, depicted on different objects in the 6th century, also on textiles for ordinary people, see Rutschowscaya 2000, 220, 222, Maguire 2000, 279-82, Vassilaki (ed.) 2000, 273, Cat.no. 8, Mundell Mango 2000, 195, 204, Yeroulanou 2000, 228, Pl. 172.

[1236] Constantine of Tios, ch. 11, 14 - 16 [Halkin 1965, 98, 101-5]. Cf. Garland 1999, 85.

[1237] Delbroeck 1929, 262-9.

Other scholars have opted for Emperor Heraklios' transference of the Holy Cross back to Jerusalem in 630, or even the transfer of relics arranged by Empress Eudoxia in the early 5th century as the subject of the image.[1238] According to John Wortley, the ivory could have been crafted long, possibly centuries, after the event it purports to depict, hence its elusive nature and the difficulties in pinpointing precisely which *translatio* of relics it refers to.[1239] Brubaker dates it at around 800 and the rule of Irene, but suggests that it depicts events of the 5th century and the Empress Pulcheria.[1240] Paul Speck argues on the basis of the figure of Christ on the building in the background, which is supposedly the *Chalke* gate, that the ivory cannot pre-date 711, assuming a much later date at some point after 843, possibly even in the 10th century.[1241] Regardless of who it represents, it is clear that the depicted empress is a prominent player at the event.

According to Talbot, female patronage of art was one of the ways in which women of the higher classes could be more active and visible outside the home. However, as discussed earlier, patronage was also expected of men in the higher classes and had more to do with status than gender.[1242] It was one way to mark one's station in society. As Connor points out, "a creative project was a contribution to society and therefore linked to the patron's place in society; the more visible the commission, the more powerful and elevated the patron's position would appear." She continues: "Patronage must therefore be considered in relation to its intended viewer of public, for only through the reception and acknowledgement of a patron's commission was status conveyed to the individual." She further notes that ordinary women could also be involved in donating to society, usually on a small scale and with locally significant objects, and several individuals may even have made a donation as a group.[1243] These types of donation, including smaller objects, are discussed above in Chapter III.C.[1244] Donations in the form of commissioning objects of art or larger-scale building activities played a significant role in public behaviour, in which individuals, women included, engaged in accordance with their financial potential. Thereby they communicated their wealth, social status and political or ideological preferences through their choices of commissioned work. As in Antiquity, an individual might be esteemed in terms of how he or she disposed of wealth in the form of patronage or donation to benefit the community.

Corippus' poem is a reverse example of art as politics, which involves women. Laudatory poems, often publicly presented, were often used to seek favours. Although the two prefaces are addressed to two men, Emperor Justin II and the *questor* Anastasius, respectively, Corippus also evokes the benevolence of the women closest to the throne, Empress Sophia and Justin's mother Vigilantia, possibly in an attempt to flatter his way into gaining some financial or career advantage

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[1238] Spain 1977, 281, 287 & fig. 1, 302, connecting it to Heraklios and dating it between 630 and 638 with a Syro-Palestinian provenance. According to Wilson 1984, 603-4 it illustrates the actions of Eudoxia but he does not date the art work. Cf. Volbach 1976, 95-6, No. 143 & Taf. 76. Cameron 1976, 180, McClanan 2002, 24-6, & fig. 1.2.

[1239] Wortley 1980, 393-4.

[1240] Brubaker 1999, 270-7, Brubaker & Haldon 2001, 78-9, Brubaker & Haldon 2011, 132-5, 347-8.

[1241] Speck 2003a, 197-200.

[1242] Talbot 1997, 119, 128-9. Talbot 1994, 106. See Chapter III.C, 126.

[1243] Connor 2004, 95-6.

[1244] See Chapter III.C, 129-31.

through the influence of these imperial ladies. Averil Cameron even describes them as 'veiled patrons' of Corippus.[1245] He pays tribute to them in the preface: "Your mother Vigilantia, source of your calm judgement, is always in your eyes, and she whom you carry in the whole of your heart, the gracious empress, Wisdom, the sharer of your rule."[1246] Later he writes: "I offer my tongue: you, goddesses, give me the words, both Vigilantia the mother and Wisdom, queen of all, you who protect the world. You are enough for me in place of all the Muses in composing my song, you tell me all the hidden secrets."[1247] He repeats his dedication at the end of Book Three: "Divine and propitious empress, holy and venerable name, immortal good, the wisdom of our tongue, I dedicate this to your auspices; look upon me as I sing your wishes and offer merciful aid to my prayer."[1248] Aside from pleasing the new emperor, it was clearly important for Corippus to impress these women. At the same time it made them visible through art, in this case literature.

A somewhat similar case, although on a smaller scale, is found in a papyrus from the same period. A lawyer named Dioscorus from Apfrodito in Egypt was involved in a drawn-out tax dispute with Menas regarding some villages. Menas was the estate manager acting for the landowner and *pagarch* Flavia Patricia. Dioscorus wrote a flattering poem for Flavia Patricia to mark her wedding, possibly in an attempt to obtain her goodwill and persuade her to keep her eager estate manager at bay.[1249]

Art was also used by the authorities to remind people of who ruled the Empire and who were important personae. Reference is made above to statues put up in or sent to various places, such as those depicting the new rulers Phocas and Leontia sent to Rome and other cities.[1250] Similarly, the images on coinage were political, the appearance or non-appearance of empresses having symbolic value and a political message. Although imperial women had appeared on coinage previously, there was an ideological change when Sophia was depicted with the Emperor on copper coins.[1251] Sophia also featured with Justin on art objects intended as diplomatic gifts abroad, such as the above-mentioned 'Vatican cross'.[1252]

Imperial ladies had, of course, been depicted before in paintings and sculptures, but starting from Theodora they occupied a more prominent place in official art. This may be connected to an ideological change in the position of the empress.[1253] Of the two versions describing a group of statues in the harbour of Sophiae in Constantinople, Averil Cameron is inclined to believe the one that mentions Vigilantia as the fourth person next to Justin II, Sophia, and their daughter Arabia.[1254]

[1245] Cameron 1976, 185 comment to line 149, and 200 comment to line 182. Cf. Garland 1999, 41.

[1246] Corippus, *In laudem.,* Praefatio:21-26 (translated by A. Cameron).

[1247] Corippus, *In laudem.,* I:6-13 (translated by A. Cameron).

[1248] Corippus, *In laudem.,* III:145-150 (translated by A. Cameron).

[1249] *P.Lit.Lond.* 100 c. = *P. Aphrod.Lit*. IV 35 (dated ca. 566-7). Sarris 2006, 113, Ruffini 2011, 420.

[1250] Stratos 1968, 67. See Chapter V.A, 182.

[1251] Coins depicting Eudoxia, Eudocia, Pulcheria and Verina, for example, had been struck in earlier centuries, but they were gold or silver coins minted in commemoration of special occasions, not small-value copper coins for daily use and handled by a larger number of subjects. See e.g. Goodacre 1957, *passim*. See also, Chapter V.A, 179, 181-5.

[1252] Garland 1999, 48-9, and above, Chapter V.A, 180.

[1253] Cf. James 2001, 26-45 on monumental art representations of empresses in Early Byzantium.

[1254] *Patria*, II.62 & III.37. Cameron 1976, 133-4 comment to line 106. The other version features Narses instead of

In this case the Emperor is accompanied by three women, his wife, his daughter and his mother. Interestingly enough, these are the same women who get attention in Corippus' laudatory poem dedicated to Justin II, as Arabia is also paid homage.[1255] As noted, it was through Vigilantia and Sophia that Justin was connected to earlier rulers, hence art, in placing these women next to him, may have been used to emphasise this connection and his claim to imperial power.

Among the preserved smaller art objects are two diptychs representing empresses, possibly Ariadne, Sophia or Constantina.[1256] Nikephoros describes Emperor Heraklios showing a portrait of his daughter Eudokia to the Khagan of the Turks with the intent of forging a political marriage alliance between the two.[1257] The 8th or early-9th-century *Parastaseis syntomoi chronikai* lists statues still to be seen around Constantinople at that time. Although most of the representations mentioned in the text depicted men, imperial ladies of the past were also present in the public space. The text mentions that Constantine's mother Helena was the subject of several statues in both porphyry and bronze. Verina, wife of Leo I, was the subject of at least two statues, one on a pillar near St. Agathonikos. Euphemia, wife of Justin I, only had a small stele of her erected near one of the churches, her namesake hurch of St. Euphemia. A large statue made of silver of Eudoxia, Emperor Arcadius' wife, as well as statues of three of her daughters are mentioned in the text. A bronze statue of Eudoxia was erected on a pillar and another at the Augusteum. Both of Emperor Zeno's wives, Ariadne and Arcadia, were represented by statues in prominent places, and a gilded statue of Sophia at the Milion, with representations of her daughter Arabia and her niece Helena has already been mentioned.[1258] Sculpture was in decline as an art form and new representations were often made in other forms of art, especially mosaics[1259] and painting: this explains, to some extent, why imperial ladies from earlier periods are relatively well represented compared to the scarcity of those from later periods among the above-mentioned statues. Later empresses were probably depicted in other art forms preferred at the time and thus were not included among the listed public statues. At least regarding Theodora we know this applied. The duration of the reign and personal popularity are other factors to consider. Regardless of the form, however, imperial ladies were displayed in art and they exploited art for political purposes. Objects such as clothing, jewellery and insignia of rank can be added, which were objects of art in themselves, and utilised on the public social stage.

C. Women of the populace

Talbot, in her short chapter on Byzantine women, does not acknowledge the political power or

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Vigilantia, making it a group of two men and two women. See above, Chapters V.A, 180, V.B, 188.

[1255] Corippus, *In laud.* II:70-83, gives a lengthy description of Arabia's beauty to honour her. See also above, 188.

[1256] Cameron 1976, 198. Volbach 1976, 49-50, Nos. 51 & 52, Taf. 27. Angelova 2004, 1-2, identifies them with Ariadne, dating them to c. 500. McClanan 2002, 168-78, suggests that they might represent Sophia.

[1257] Nikephoros, *Brev*. 12. In the Greek text it is ὁς Τούρκων κύριος. The picture was probably not on public display, having been made for other purposes.

[1258] Cameron & Herrin 1984, *passim.* Brubaker & Haldon 2001, 75, 301, Brubaker & Haldon 2011, 144

[1259] A tangible example of mosaic replacing plastic art in Byzantium is to be found on a fragment of a round base in the museum in Nikopolis (Greece), where an antique relief is covered with a Christian mosaic.

political influence of women other than empresses and occasionally some princesses.[1260] Of course, it depends on how one defines political power and influence, but, as I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the political arena of Byzantine society cannot be defined in modern terms. One should rather consider how individuals engaged in discussions, controversies, activities and actions with a view to influencing, in one way or another, the course of events or the decision makers.

Appealing a case or demonstrating opinions became political if the consequences extended beyond the family, neighbours or professional associates. Individuals siding with different interest groups or opposite parties in a conflict become political. In a broader context, religious controversies, faction riots and individual acts become part of the political arena. From this perspective, female participation in political activities was more in evidence than Talbot may acknowledge, although to a lesser extent than among the male population and possibly not as effectively. Laiou and Talbot both mention women's involvement in riots and taking sides in controversies, typically religious conflicts, but they imply that this was a way in which women could be active because they lacked political influence.[1261] Political influence, again, is a relative concept and one tends to see it from a modern perspective. Different forms of passive and active involvement among interest groups could have a political impact, even if not part of the official system and not the most wished for way of channelling sentiments from a governmental perspective. The focus in the following is on the involvement of women of the populace, including by peaceful means such as petitioning as well as more violent forms of action. Given the context of this study, the emphasis is on actions related to public space.

Women petitioned in different ways to achieve some goal or to obtain help. Although they were prohibited from initiating a lawsuit for someone else, they could make a plea for their loved ones.[1262] There is an interesting passage in Corippus' laudatory poem. As part of his recognition process, people gathered in the Hippodrome to approve the election of Justin and his ascent to the imperial throne. No women are mentioned at this point and the general reference to 'all the people' gathering on that occasion seems in this case to indicate only the male population.[1263] Later on in the narrative, however, when Justin has been appointed Emperor and he and Sophia come before the people to receive cheers, women do appear on the scene. Wives and mothers of imprisoned men come before the new Emperor seated in the *kathisma* making pleas for their loved ones:

> Wives came weeping for their husbands in prison, and mothers for their sons. Great grief in affliction cannot preserve modesty. The throng came, forgetting its sex, pitiable in its very dress, through the midst of the people. When they reached the revered box of the emperor,

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[1260] Talbot 1997, 140-1. Cf. Laiou 1981, 199, remarking 15 years earlier: "research into the specifics of the nomenclature attached to the office of Empress, or of the stated function of the Empress will be less rewarding than a study of realities, that is, of the political activities of women."

[1261] Laiou 1981, 252, Talbot 1997, 133-4.

[1262] Cf. Chapter II.D, 80-81.

[1263] Corippus, *In laudem*, I:344ff. This is expected and correlates with the ideology of society: only the males in the population could claim the political right to approve the election of an emperor. Cf. Kazhdan 1999, 300, on the use of the *topos* "all the people".

they all lay down, their breasts on the hard ground.[1264]

The women are taking advantage of the politically sensitive situation: the new emperor has to establish and secure his position by granting favours to his subjects. The same part of the narrative also mentions how many debts were payed and loans were written off.

Other incidents are recorded when women in distress in various ways appeal directly to the Emperor. Nichephors relates how a widow living in a village near the capital had been wronged by her powerful neighbour and his servants had killed one of her sons. In her distress she travelled to the capital and threw herself in front of Emperor Heraklios when he came out of the imperial palace on horseback in a procession. She asked for the crimes committed against her family to be punished. The bodyguards were prepared to strike the woman but the Emperor stopped them, although telling her not to disturb him any more at that point. He promised to arrange a hearing however, and later the neighbour was caught, a trial was arranged, and the perpetrator punished by death.[1265]

Codex Justinianus occasionally mentions how a petition from some individual, male or female, could motivate the legislator to consider certain circumstances that required regulation. The long preface to one of Justinian's *Novella* tells of a woman named Gregoria who presented a petition to the Emperor related to her anti-nuptial donation from a first marriage and inheritance regarding her daughter. A long description of the details of her case follows, citing from written statements by both mother and daughter during investigations into the case. Quotations from Gregoria's statement even include her opinions and evaluation of the cruelty and injustice of previous legislation.[1266] It is mentioned in another law text that petitioners frequently appealed to the emperor and among the complainants were women who had been lured into cohabitation through promises of marriage and were later rejected and cast out, a problem that the law addressed.[1267] This kind of personal petitioning came to have a broader and enduring impact through legislation and imperial action. Procopius relates, in both benevolent and malicious tones, how Empress Theodora had a tendency to help the women who came to her with their problems. In his official history writing he describes the Empress as "naturally inclined to assist women in misfortune". The *Secret History*, on the other hand, refers to Theodora's assistance of women as more like malicious meddling.[1268] It is thus evident that petitioning, in different forms, to persons in high positions was one way of seeking favours or justice, and women were among the petitioners. The petitioning could be done by letter or in person. In the latter case, public space was where people who did not belong to the court or to the highest strata of society could seek or seize the opportunity to address influential individuals, which is what the women in the Hippodrome and the widow entreating Emperor Heraklios did.

[1264] Corippus, *In laudem*, II:407-420 (translated by Averil Cameron, 1976). Cf. Procopius, *Bell*. 1.24.6, who states that women did not normally go to public displays such as horse races at the Hippodrome.
[1265] Nikephoros, *Brev.* 4.
[1266] *Nov.* 2 pr. (1).
[1267] *Nov.* 74 chapter 5. The law gives the status of legitimate wife to a woman who has evidently co-habited with a man under the promise of marriage and whose children have been acknowledged as his legitimate offspring. Cf. Cameron 2006a, 92 on appeals still being made to Justinian regarding legal matters.
[1268] Procopius, *Bell.* 7.31.14. Procopius, *Anecd*. 17.27-37. John Lydus, *De Magistratibus* 3.69 also comments on Theodora helping "those wronged". Cf. Garland 1999, 18.

It was always possible to appeal to a local dignitary or local authorities. A certain Sophia from Aphroditio appealed to the duke for justice after being deprived of her inheritance from her first husband: her second husband had been killed, her child had been taken from her, and she had suffered imprisonment and torture.[1269] The law courts dealt with explicit legal cases. A man named Heraklios and a monk called Victor died under suspicious circumstances, again in Aphrodito. Among the records from the trial are statements from Victor's brother and Heraklios' widow Maria accusing a soldier named Flavius Menas of having a hand in the murders.[1270]

Not all the narrated female actions were peaceful. Some stories tell of women taking more radical actions either in a conflict situation or as a form of protest. Female participation in the Iconoclastic controversy of the 8th and early 9th centuries, which has attracted some attention among scholars, is discussed at the beginning of this chapter. Among the better-known stories of this controversy are those of women participating in the resistance to the removal of the icon of Christ above the Chalke Gate by the order of Emperor Leo III around the year 726.[1271] Kazhdan, Talbot, Cormack, Brubaker and Haldon are among scholars who have discussed problems related to these stories and the iconophile propaganda embedded in them, which have mixed up events and expanded the stories.[1272] In any case, the portrayal of women as active participants in violent protests against governmental anti-icon policies is interesting. The stories tell of radical female action in an antagonistic situation, showing that this was not unthinkable, nor unheard of. Other stories refer to women taking more peaceful approaches such as hiding icons or sympathising, siding with and helping known iconophiles.[1273] Whatever the preferred explanations regarding the stories about female participation in the Iconoclastic controversy, there is a political aspect to involvement in a cause that ultimately opposes authorities on the highest level.

There were other events than the Chalke Gate incident involving violent female action in a politically volatile situation. *Miraculi St. Demetrii*, which relates events from Thessaloniki in the late 6th and 7th centuries, was written relatively close in time to the episodes described in it, the first part by a bishop of the city and the second part by an anonymous writer.[1274] There is a factual basis to the tales, although on the explanatory level the narrative takes a religious perspective. The text relates to a situation in the history of the city when it was surrounded by immigrated Slavonic tribes, with whom the inhabitants had both commercial and hostile relationships. One story is about how

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[1269] *P.Cair.Masp*. I 67005 (AD 567 or 568). Ruffini 2011, 545.

[1270] *P.Mich.* XIII 660 & XIII 601, *SB* XVI 12542 (6th century). Ruffini 2008, 180-4, Ruffini 2011, 354.

[1271] *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, chapter 10; *SynaxCP* 828-30 & 877-880. See above, Chapter III, 101-3, on versions of the episode. Cf. Herrin 1983, 70-1, Kazhdan & Talbot 1991/1992, 391-7, Talbot 2001, 4-6, Brubaker 1999, 260-4, Auzépy 1999, 193-4, 203, 298-300, Brubaker & Haldon 2001, 71, 227-7, & Brubaker & Haldon 2011, 89-90, 128-35.

[1272] Kazhdan & Talbot 1991/1992, 391-4, and 404, analyse female participation in the Iconoclastic controversy as a reaction to growing patriarchal tendencies in the aftermath of some troubled centuries of struggle against Arab invasion, seeing women's pro-icon sentiments as a reaction against such tendencies. Cormack 1997, 39-43 interprets strong female participation as an explanatory myth suiting iconophile purposes. Brubaker 1999, *passim*, Auzépy 1999, 193-4, 203, 298-300, Brubaker & Haldon 2001, 71, 226-7, and Brubaker & Haldon 2011, 89-90, 128-35 discuss a later iconophile invention of the Chalke gate incident.

[1273] Cf. e.g. Herrin 1983, 71, Kazhdan & Talbot 1991/1992, 395. See also above, Chapter III, 103.

[1274] Lemerle 1981, 27-8, 32, 44-6 79-80, 83-5, 171-3.

some women obtained information that a Slavonic chieftain named Chatzon was residing in the city and that he might attempt to betray it to the surrounding enemy tribes. The women went to the house of some nobles in which the man was hiding, dragged him out into the street and stoned him. The tale could be read in different ways, of course. It could reflect actual events, which therefore are included, or it could be a stylistic device to underline both the seriousness of the situation, when even women have to take drastic action, and the strength of saintly protection, which is considered the ultimate reason for salvation from enemy intrigues. Whatever the reason, the author thought the story had to be included in the record of events. It is also interesting that, as well as describing the violent female intervention, the narrator felt the need to explain the women's behaviour. He explains that it was the patron saint of the city, St. Demetrios, who thereby interfered and saved the city by giving the women the manly strength to perform a deed that otherwise went against female nature.[1275] Here, ideas of femininity clash with a narrated situation, which therefore has to be explained. What is underlined as unusual, however, and needs explaining, is the aggressiveness and strength of the women, whereas their presence in public space passes without further comment and does not seem to be out of the ordinary.

As a prelude to the events of the *Nika* riot in 532, Procopius tells of rival circus factions, the Blue and the Green, which existed in connection with games at the hippodrome in several larger cities of the Empire but were particularly active in Constantinople. The conflicts often took the form of violent clashes between faction members. On this occasion Procopius mentions that women were also involved in the quarrels, siding with one faction or the other, even though they did not watch the games. He does not claim that they were involved in the violent struggles, just that they participated by taking sides and expressing their opinion.[1276]

To what extent the stories related above are anchored in actual events and how much has to be attributed to dramatic rhetoric is difficult to ascertain, but tales like these indicate that it was not unheard of for women to be actively engaged in the political situations of the day, occasionally even violently. Political or religious emotions and unusual circumstances occasionally brought women into action in public space, even in ways that contradicted common views of the female nature and proper female behaviour. Such tales could be compared with similar stories from earlier and later periods, in which women also publicly demonstrate their opinions. Connor discusses the *Acts of Thekla*, in which women are described sitting together and protesting publicly about the legal treatment and punishment of Thekla.[1277] Both Talbot and Garland mention Psellos' account of the inhabitants' rebellion against Emperor Michael V in 1042: women who were not generally seen outside the women's quarters appeared in public shouting and rebelling, and even young girls joined the mob attacking and destroying mansions belonging to the Emperor's family.[1278] Although rare, such narratives suggest that women were, on occasion, politically active in public space.

[1275] *Mir. St. Dem.*., II.1 [193] (Lemerle 1979, 174, 179) (events ca. 614-8). See also Lemerle 1981, 87, and Kazhdan 1999, 149.
[1276] Procopius, *Bell.* 1.24.1-6.
[1277] Connor 2004, 2, 6-7. *Acts of Thekla*, 32 - 38 (from the 2nd century, but re-written & popular throughout the Middle Ages).
[1278] Talbot 1997, 129-30, and Garland 2006, 166-7.

VI Culture and secular society

Despite prevailing ideals of female segregation, the sources refer to occasions and circumstances that provided opportunities to mingle with the opposite sex. Some of this social interaction took place in the houses in which the women lived, when men from outside entered the domestic sphere. On other occasions it happened when women ventured out of their homes, bound for other private spheres or for events taking place in the public sphere. The following section concerns the involvement of women in cultural and social events as spectators or as interacting participants. Various aspects of being viewed in public are then discussed, specifically with regard to the visual display of the female body both in art and in the personal *habitus*.

A. Women as spectators, participants and social actors

I have already discussed religious gatherings as acceptable occasions for female participation and as opportunities for social mingling. Given the survival of a larger proportion of religious texts than secular material, it is easy to forget that Byzantine society was like any other, abounding with human feelings and desires and with plenty of non-religious occasions for social mingling. The poems of contemporaries that Agathias collected in his *Kyklos* hint at the existence of gatherings and opportunities allowing social interaction between women and men. Caution should be exercised in making far-fetched social interpretations based on poems that fed on the ancient literary form and tradition and contain literary games, but the poems would also be void of meaning to a contemporary audience if they described impossible settings that were lacking in contemporary society.

A series of poems depict sensual encounters involving not only female performers and women of ill fame, but also maidens and married women. They may be romantic fantasies not corresponding to any particular event, but they hint at social settings and the subtle rules of social conduct, within which romantic games might also be played. There is, for example, a poem about a girl in the company of her mother giving away two apples to a man:

> Eluding her mother's apprehensive eyes,
> the charming girl gave me a pair of rosy apples.
> I think she had secretly ensorcelled those red apples with the torch of love,
> for I alack! am wrapped in flames,
> and instead of two breasts, ye gods,
> my purposeless hands grasp two apples.[1279]

[1279] *Anth. Gr.* V:290 (by Paulos Silentiarios, 6th century) (translated by W.R. Patton, 1948-60). For erotic implications often associated with apples, see e.g. Messis 2006, 631-3, noting that given between men, apples were symbols of friendship or favour. Cf. Theophanes, *Chron.* 5940 [AD 447/8], on a magnificent apple given to Emperor Theodore II, which then circulates via his Empress Eudocia to the *magistros* Paulinus, and back to the Emperor: as a result, Paulinus was exiled and put to death.

Another poem is about a girl named Rhodanthe sending kisses with her girdle as a messenger:

> Divine Rhodanthe, being prevented from kissing me,
> held her maiden girdle stretched out between us,
> and kept kissing it, while I, like a gardener,
> diverted the stream of love to another point,
> sucking up the kiss, and so returning it from a distance,
> smacking with my lips on her girdle.
> Even this a little eased my pain,
> for the sweet girdle was like a ferry plying from lip to lip.[1280]

A rural poem by Agahtias tells of men treading the vine when a woman named Rhodanthe visits the site, leans over the vat, and affects the men's hearts with her beauty.[1281] In yet another poem he dwells on the topic of an object as a messenger and deliverer of kisses:

> I care not for wine, but if thou wouldst make me drunk,
> taste the cup first and I will receive it when thou offerest it.
> For, once thou wilt touch it with thy lips, it is no longer easy to abstain
> or to fly from the sweet cup-bearer.
> The cup ferries thy kiss to me, and tells me what joy it tasted.[1282]

A poem by Paulos Silentiarios tells of a woman at a feast giving her wreath to a man, although on this occasion it cannot be determined what type of woman Chariclo was or her civic status:

> Ever since Chariclo, playing with me at the feast,
> put her wreath slyly on my head, a deadly fire devours me;
> for the wreath, it seems, had in it something of the poison
> that burnt Glauce, the daughter of Creon.[1283]

Another of Agathias' poems in the form of a dialogue between friends is about falling in love with a girl at a place for dining, but seeking a secret love affair, wanting to avoid marriage:

> A. Why do you sigh? B. I am in love.
> A. With whom? B. A girl.
> A. Is she pretty? B. In my eyes.
> A. Where did you notice her? B. There, where I went to dinner, I saw her

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[1280] *Anth. Gr.* V:285 (by Agathias Scholasticus, 6th century) (translated by W.R. Patton, 1948-60).
[1281] *Anth. Gr.* XI:64 (by Agathias Scholasticus, 6th century).
[1282] *Anth. Gr.* V:261 (by Agathias Scholasticus, 6th century) (translated by W.R. Patton, 1948-60).
[1283] *Anth. Gr.* V:288 (by Paulos Silentiarios, 6th century) (translated by W.R. Patton, 1948-60).

reclining with the rest.
A. Do you hope to succeed. B. Yes, yes, my friend, but I want a secret affair
and not an open one.
A. You are averse then from lawful wedlock? B. I learnt for certain
that she is very poorly off.
A. You learnt! You lie, you are not in love;
how can a heart that reckons correctly be touched with love's madness?[1284]

Although these poems feed on old literary topics and were written within the tradition of love poetry, as discussed in the introduction, old *topoi* were remoulded to suit and thereby reflect contemporary society. The texts hint at social occasions on which men and women met, providing an opportunity for flirtation. Some poems do not make clear the civic status of the women they address, others are doubtlessly about women of ill fame, but some clearly refer to unmarried girls (such as the poem with the apples) or married women, as in the following:

When I saw Melite, I grew pale, for her husband was with her,
but I said to her trembling 'May I push back the bolts of your door /---/'
But she, laughing and glancing at her husband, said,
'You had better keep away from my door, or the dog may worry you'.[1285]

Poems about women attending feasts, dinners or other similar occasions can be compared in part with Corippus' description of Empress Sophia partaking in a celebratory banquet with Justin II.[1286] The poems and Corippus' panegyric point from different angles to the existence of feasts and celebrations at which at least some women participate with the men. The assumption is, of course, that the poems primarily reflect the urban upper-class circles to which their authors were accustomed and in which, in the 6th century, certain convivial social mingling must have been accepted. One also has to presume that there were unspoken social rules covering who, how and in what company women attended such gatherings. Symptomatically, much of the described flirtation happens through the mediation of some object, without direct physical contact, which is suitable for a society that purported to maintain a level of separation between the sexes.

A somewhat contrary situation is presented in two manuscript illustrations, the above-mentioned picture of Pharaoh's banquet in the Wiener Genesis (Fig. 2a) and a depiction of Herod's banquet in the Sinope Gospel.[1287] In neither of these illustrations are women among the banquet guests reclining on couches around the semi-circular banquet table. The only female figure present in the picture of Herod's banquet is Salome, standing and receiving the head of St. John on a plate

[1284] *Anth. Gr.* V:267 (by Agathias Scholasticus, 6th century) (translated by W.R. Patton, 1948-60).
[1285] *Anth. Gr.* V:242 (by Eratosthenes Scholasticus, 6th century) (translated by W.R. Patton, 1948-60).
[1286] Corippus, *In laudem*. III:85ff. See also Chapter V.A, 178.
[1287] *Cod. Vindob. Theol. Graec. 31*, fol. 17 v. (early 6th century), and Paris, Bibliothéque National, *suppl. gr. 1286, fol. 10v* (6th - 7th centuries). See Spain 1977, 291 & fig. 17. Kitzinger 1958, 35-6 on the dating and possible Syro-Palestinian provenance for these manuscripts.

after her dance for the king; the only female figures present at Pharaoh's banquet, in turn, are two female musicians entertaining the guests. These thus appear to mirror the type of gathering in which it was not considered proper for women other than entertainers and the like to be present.

Attitudes towards female participation in social events seemed stricter beyond urban circles, and towards the 8th century and beyond. A reflection of this are the stricter attitudes and rules conveyed in a *Novella* by Leo VI from the 9th century regarding female appearance in a public law court.[1288] Another example is the strictness exhibited in the *Life of St. Philaretos the Merciful* in keeping daughters of the family out of sight: Philaretos professes that they never left their chambers.[1289] The early-9th-century text on events in the late 8th century also relates to life in the provinces. The 'never' should not be taken literally, however, as that hardly corresponds to the day-to-day reality in that daughters might accompany the family to church services and similar events, but it shows commitment to ideals of keeping daughters segregated and guarded, especially from the gaze of men.

Despite the references to social mingling in some narratives, the constant eye kept on female behaviour should be remembered. The reputation of unmarried girls had to be protected for the future, with prospects of marriage in mind, whereas wives had to consider their reputation in the present. The law allowed a husband to divorce his wife on the mere suspicion of her infidelity. First, he had to give three notes of warning, but after this merely speaking to the suspected other man in a public place was reason enough for the husband to take the case to court and prosecute for adultery, as long as three witnesses to the encounter between the two parties could be provided. Conversation taking place inside a church was one of the few exceptions.[1290] It should nevertheless be borne in mind that there had to be a suspicion of infidelity: after all, women were free to speak with men in public in other situations. However, there was clearly a delicate balance in place regarding the settings in which contact between individuals of different gender was acceptable, especially when married women were concerned.

Women were mainly passive spectators rather than active participants in most cultural and social events. References to women watching imperial funeral processions are discussed above.[1291] In these cases women are depicted watching from front doors, windows and balconies of buildings along the route of the procession. This reflects the Trier ivory (Fig.8b), which depicts spectators watching the arrival of a relic from the windows of a large building in the background.[1292] The *Chronicon Paschale* mentions that women were given the same opportunities as men to see and venerate the Holy Lance upon arrival in Constantinople in 614, albeit on separate occasions.[1293] It

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[1288] Leo VI, *Nov.*, no. 48. Geanakoplos 1984, 304. See Chapters II.A, 62, II.E, 93.

[1289] *Life of St. Philaretos*, 4th century (Rydén 2002, 89). See Chapter II.A, 61-2.

[1290] *Nov*. 117, c. 15 pr. & (1). Beaucamp 1990, 163-4. See Chapter III.A, 106.

[1291] Justinian I's funeral (AD 565) in Corippus, *In laudem*, III:36ff., and Eudokia's funeral (AD 612) in Nikephoros, *Brev.* 3. See Chapters II.A, 63, III.A, 117.

[1292] E.g. Delbrueck 1929, 261-9, Spain 1977, 281, 287 & fig. 1, Volbach 1976, 95-6, No. 143 & Taf. 76, Cameron 1976, 181. See Chapter III.A 117-8, V.B, 195. Wilson 1984, 609 suggests that no women are among these spectators. Cf. Constantinou 2005, 25, 32, mentioning female spectators among the audience during the torture of female martyrs, as e.g. in the *Passion of Barbara* (Greek legend probably written in the 6th or the 7th century).

[1293] *Chron. Pasch.* AD 614 [p. 705]. See Chapter III.A, 108.

was more chaotic when Mary attempted to enter the church during the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross in Jerusalem to venerate the Holy Cross, together with other people rushing to the event.[1294] All types of women participated as spectators at religious events, and all social classes gathered in the churches. A story in *Pratum Spirituale* exemplifies this. A miracle related to Holy Communion had supposedly taken place in Seleucia near Antioch, witnessed by the whole community, not just a few individuals. The list of different types of people, exemplifying the whole community, is arranged in pairs and includes "men and women, old men and children, youths and elders, masters and slaves, rich and poor," finishing with "widows and decently married people; those in and those under authority."[1295] Although a *topos* on how to present the totality of people, it also demonstrates who might be anticipated to attend and witness such remarkable events.

Religious events could be attended by women in general, but there were other more secular occasions that were not suitable for them all. Authors such as Corippus, using the *topos* that people of 'every sex and age' came running to see some event, would hardly include women of the upper classes, in light of Agathias' comment that it was the peril of an earthquake that drove women of dignity out into the streets to mingle with men, thereby disturbing the normal order of society.[1296] Averil Cameron dismisses the expression 'every sex and age' as a literary cliché, but even as such it would hardly be used if it was considered totally impossible for at least some categories of women to be present among male spectators.[1297] By way of contrast, in the context of Justin II being hailed as Emperor by the people Corippus states: "All the people <came> here, boys, young men and old men... the crowds applauded... all had one voice, one mind: one name pleased all the people".[1298] No women are mentioned, which would be accurate because they lacked the right to any official say in the succession of emperors. This shows a sense of distinction and that the expression 'every sex and age' was not used indiscriminately, only when women were also likely to be present. On a more cruel note, it is claimed in the *Life of St. Stephen the Younger* that the Emperor even ordered women and children to leave their tasks to come and witness the public torture and death of Stephen and to partake in the stoning.[1299] The aim was to emphasise the viciousness of Emperor Constantine V, so this was obviously not considered appropriate.

More active participation in events was usually reserved for special categories of women with certain privileges, such as church virgins walking next to deacons in Justinian's funeral procession, and imperial women at state banquets.[1300] Some sources hint at festivities following ancient traditions at which people, including women, joined in public dancing, sometimes

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[1294] *St. Mary of Egypt*, chapters 22-24. See Chapter III.A, 106-7.

[1295] Moschos, *Prat.Spir*., chapter 79. (translated by John Wortley, 1992)

[1296] E.g. Corippus, *In laudem* IV:53f, on a large wooden structure with seats built for upcoming celebrations, writes: the "building gave joy first to the happy city. The people marvelled and in their enthusiasm to see every sex and age came running.". Agathias, *Hist.* V.3.7. See introduction, 3.

[1297] Cameron 1976, 180.

[1298] Corippus, *In laudem* I:344ff.

[1299] *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, chapter 70. Nikephoros, *Brev*. 81, briefly mentions the brutal imprisonment and execution of Stephen, but without mentioning women. Cf. Garland 2006, 169-171, on women present at 'parades of infamy' in later centuries.

[1300] Corippus, *In laudem* III:36ff., 'choir of virgins', III:85ff. & 135ff., Sophia at a celebratory banquet.

carnivalesque in nature. This kind of public dancing was prohibited by the Council in *Trullo* 692, but the custom seems to have continued: the prohibition was renewed in the 12th century.[1301] A poem in Agathias' *Kyklos* could refer to such celebrations when it mentions a place by the Bosporus "where the people in the spring celebrate the dance".[1302]

Sources imply mechanisms of social networks used to protect women moving and participating in a more public sphere. The *Life of St. Matrona of Perge* mentions several occasions when women resort to female networks and contacts.[1303] Pursuing a religious life and attempting to escape her husband, Matrona sought the company and help of Eugenia and Susannah, both connected to a church in Constantinople and the latter at least a church widow.[1304] Outside Beirut young pagan girls come in the company of other women to see Matrona, while later she relies on the help of so-called 'freewomen' with the arrangements for her young proselytes and for a safe trip back to Constantinople. She travels with two socially elevated women, the mother of the ex-prefect Elias and the mother of a *scholasticoi*, who are going to the capital to visit their children. The text also indicates some sort of gathering among these 'freewomen' in Beirut to listen to Matrona's teachings.[1305] Later in the text, two high-ranking sisters move around together socially, in a similar way as the two women of senatorial rank coming from Ephesos to visit St. Theodore in Sykeon. *Pratum Spirituale*, in turn, tells of the wife of a Monophysite man visiting her neighbour to take communion.[1306] It is through female contacts that Antiochiane becomes acquainted with Matrona, eventually making an extensive donation to her monastic foundation.[1307] Female networks were ultimately attached to male connections that could take authorised actions,[1308] but social contact and mutual assistance between women functioned to facilitate movement and activity outside the domestic sphere.

The line between public and private in female networks and social participation is elusive. Some sources indicate efforts to separate women's social activities, creating distinctive female spheres in common public space, as with the separate days assigned for male and female venerators of the Holy Lance in 614.[1309] The public space in itself was not reserved specifically for either men

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[1301] *Trullo*, 51 & 62. Herrin 1992, 102-3, Webb 1997, 130-1, Garland 2006, 171-3. See Chapter IV.B, 154.

[1302] *Anth. Gr.* XVI:284 (by Leontius Scholasticus, 6th century). Poem quoted in Chapter IV.B, 154.

[1303] Topping 1988, 212-3, on the strong female perspective of the *vita*, the large group of named and anonymous women in circles around Matrona & that all categories of women are included in this female network.

[1304] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge,* chapters 2-5, 8, 10, 36. Cf. Topping 1988, 214-7. See e.g. Chapter III.D, 136, 143.

[1305] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapters 19-22, 26-7.

[1306] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapters 38-39. *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 110. Moschos, *Prat.Spir.*, chapter 29. See e.g. Chapter III, 99, 106, 120, 140.

[1307] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapters 32-36. See e.g. Chapter III, 125-6.

[1308] E.g. *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapters 4, 8, 10, (Matrona's spiritual guide Euphemia brings her to a male monastery under Bassianos with whom she has connections), chapter 11, (deacon Markellos arranges for Matrona to go into a convent in Emesa where he sent his own sister earlier), chapters 28-29 (Markellos & Bassianos arrange lodgings for Matronas in Constantinople upon her return), chapters 30-31, (a sea captain who accompanied Matrona to Constantinople is asked by Bassianos and Markellos to arrange the safe transferral of her young disciples from Beirut, with assistance from the local bishop). In the *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 25, it is also Theodore who eventually arranges for the life in religious establishments for his grandmother and sister.

[1309] *Chron. Pasch.* AD 614 [p. 705]. See Chapter III.A, 108.

or women, but visits were synchronised to keep the genders apart. Here it was time, not space, that was gendered. There was a similar time-gendered division of public space in some public baths, which were used in common by men and women, but on separate occasions.[1310] Other baths, also intended for both sexes, were separated spatially.[1311] Apart from ecclesiastic institutions, baths also provided space in which all types of women conglomerated, with the potential for networking and social mingling.[1312]

On the other hand, the texts also imply social contact beyond gender borders, as described recurrently in this chapter. In the appropriate circumstances with regard to social position women did partake in social activities and culture. An illustration in *Wiener Genesis,* following the one depicting Joseph escaping Potiphar's wife, shows her accusing Joseph of attempted seduction by showing the mantle he left behind. Two other women are with her, actively partaking in the discussion with the men (Fig. 1b).[1313] Among the poems in *Anthologia Graeca* that seem to originate from Agathias' *Kyklos* is one by a female writer, Theosebeia. It is a funeral poem for the doctor Ablabius. One might assume that she had some acquaintance with him:

> Three sorrows Medicine met with.
> First she shore her hair for Hippocrates, and next for Galen,
> and now she lies on the tearful tomb of Ablabius,
> ashamed, now he is gone, to show herself among men.[1314]

The poem shows that some women belonged to an educated class, interacting according to the social convention of the intellectual remembrance of persons from their social circle in the same way as their male counterparts did. This could be compared with Agathias' funeral poem for his sister, referring to her as accomplished both in poetry and in law.[1315] The fact that the daughters of well-to-do families might have access to some learning is demonstrated also by Hypathia/Febronia in early-9th-century Constantinople, who yearned for monastic life instead of marriage and was "determined to devote herself to divine studies and also to poetry and grammar and the metrical works of the divine fathers".[1316]

Although female chastity was to be protected, and lost virtue was both regretted and scorned

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[1310] E.g. *Anth. Gr.*, IX:625 (by Macedonius the Consul); *Anth. Gr.*, IX:783 (anonymous). The latter does not clearly state the type of separation, but it was most likely time, as both men and women see the same statue of Hermaphrodite but interpret it in differently: "To men I am Hermes, but to women appear to be Aphrodite, and I bear the token of both my parents. Therefore not inappropriately they put me, the Hermaphrodite, the child of doubtful sex, in a bath for both sexes." Cf. Bourdieu 1977, 160-1, on time determining when a specific public space is suitable for different groups, such as types of women, with examples from the Kabyle society, in which the time of the day determines when wives can visit the public fountain and when other women have to fetch the water.

[1311] *Anth. Gr.*, IX:620 (by Paulos Silentiarios, 6th century). Cf. Leontios, *St. Symeon*, chapter 14, on separate baths. See Chapter IV.A, 151.

[1312] Cf. e.g. *Anth. Gr.*, IX:621 (anonymous), quote in Chapter IV.D, 162.

[1313] *Cod. Vindob. Theol. Graec*. 31, fol. 16 v.

[1314] *Anth. Gr.*, VII:559 (by Theosebeia, 6th century ?) (translated by W.R. Patton, 1948-60).

[1315] *Anth. Gr.*, VII:593 (by Agathias Scholasticus, 6th century). The poem is quoted in Chapter II.B, 71.

[1316] *Life of Sts. David, Symeon, and Georg of Lesbos*, 193 (translated by D. Somingo-Forastè).

upon, even religious texts demonstrated a pragmatic attitude to human nature and its faults. A woman praying to the Virgin Mary for Emperor Zeno to be punished for having seduced her daughter, for example, is given the answer that, although the Virgin would like to see the Emperor punished for this, his good deeds and generosity weighed more heavily in celestial eyes and prevented it.[1317] A higher social status and good deeds took precedence over the dishonour afflicted on a family girl. Ideals were one thing, life another, and necessity led to flexibility.

Sources hostile to Emperor Phocas point out his many affairs with women. John of Antioch claims he was continuously drunk and set on women, and that the daughter of a higher official, Callinike, was his official mistress.[1318] Nikephoros accuses him of violating the wife of a certain Photios, who eventually became one of the leaders overthrowing the Emperor.[1319] After his dethronement he was, according to Gregory the Monk, badly mutilated, his hand and genitals cut off, treatment that was caused by his abuse of several married women, among other things.[1320] Whatever the level of truth behind these stories, they signal that women participated in cultural life in a way that gave social opportunities for individuals of the higher classes to meet across gender boundaries.

Some texts hint at opportunities for more than mere flirtation. Although officially not acceptable, premarital sex and adultery were engaged in.[1321] One of Agathias' poems is about adultery. It reflects common disapproving attitudes and the accidental death could be interpreted as a punishment:

> A certain man secretly took his pleasure in unholy intercourse
> stealing the embraces of another man's wife;
> but of a sudden the roof fell in and buried the sinners still coupled.
> One trap holds both, and together they lie in an embrace that never ceases.[1322]

Keeping such activity out of sight and secret was important in a society that condemned most types of non-marital sex. In the words of Paulos Silentiarios:

> Let us steal our kisses, Rhodope, and the lovely and precious work of Cypris.
> It is sweet not to be found out, and to avoid the all-entrapping eyes of guardians:
> furtive amours are more honied than open ones.[1323]

[1317] Moschos, *Prat.Spir.*, chapter 175.
[1318] *John of Antioch*, IV.662. Stratos 1968, 79.
[1319] Nikephoros, *Brev.* 1.
[1320] Gregory the Monk, *Chron.* 666-7. Nikephoros, *Brev.* 1, 44-48, also mentions the mutilation. Cf. Messis 2006, 425, claiming that Gregory the Monk's explanation for the mutilation was a later construction.
[1321] Cf. e.g. *Anth. Gr.*, V:269 (by Agathias), on a man sitting between two women, stealing kisses from one, while being loved by the other. These could be courtesans, but other poems are about pursued relationships with women from more respectable layers of society, see 93-4, 149, 202-3. Cf. Leontios, *St. Symeon*, chapter 15, in which the son of a deacon becomes possessed by a demon after committing adultery with a married woman in her house.
[1322] *Anth. Gr.,* VII:572 (by Agathias Scholasticus, 6th century) (translated by W.R. Patton, 1948-60).
[1323] *Anth. Gr.,* V:219 (by Paulos Silentiarios, 6th century) (translated by W.R. Patton, 1948-60). Cf. *Anth. Gr.*, V:267

A man did not have the same need for secrecy, as long as neither a married woman nor a maiden was involved. Another of Paulos' poem ends as follows:

> /---/ Let me only clasp thee to me, my sweet,
> and feed on thy limbs to my heart's content.
> Then, for all I care, let a stranger see me or my own countryman,
> or a traveller, my dear, or a clergyman, or even my wife.[1324]

Some poems give a glimpse at female attempts to balance between keeping up an interest by giving into flirtation, while still trying to preserve some virtue:

> I press her breasts, our mouths are joined,
> and I feed in unrestrained fury round her silver neck,
> but not yet is my conquest complete;
> I still toil wooing a maiden who refuses me her bed.
> Half of herself she has given to Aphrodite and half to Pallas,
> and I waste away between the two.[1325]

and

> Soft are Sappho's kisses, soft the clasp of her snowy limbs,
> every part of her is soft. But her heart is of unyielding adamant.
> Her love reaches but to her lips, the rest is forbidden fruit.
> Who can support this? Perhaps, perhaps he who has borne
> it will find it easy to support the thirst of Tantalus.[1326]

Some poems present women as the active chooser of a partner. There is one about a wealthy girl seeing a fisherman on the beach and making him her husband.[1327] In another one a woman tells of how she goes from one lover to another, thereby gathering a wealth of love.[1328]

All these examples are from poetic literature, of course. Nevertheless, as poems written and circulating in the society of Constantinople in the 6th century they mirror plausible adventures lingering in the imaginations of both authors and audience. Other documents show that there was some reality behind the literature. Among a list of prisoners on a 6th-century papyrus is a man named

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(by Agathias), on a secret affair to avoid marriage, quoted above, 204.

[1324] *Anth. Gr.*, V:286 (by Paulos Silentiarios) (translated by W.R. Patton, 1948-60). *Anth. Gr.,* V:302 (by Agathias), legal consequences involving maidens or another man's slave, quoted in Chapter II.E, 94-5. Cf. Herrin 2013, 85.

[1325] *Anth. Gr.* V:272 (by Paulos Silentiarios) (translated by W.R. Patton, 1948-60).

[1326] *Anth. Gr.* V:246 (by Paulos Silentiarios) (translated by W.R. Patton, 1948-60).

[1327] *Anth. Gr.* IX:442 (by Agathias Scholasticus, 6th century).

[1328] *Anth. Gr.* V:232 (by Paulos Silentiarios, 6th century).

Anoup, a cultivator of vineyards by profession, who is imprisoned because of a woman, as they had been found together.[1329] Another papyrus mentions in more detail a case involving the gardener Aurelios Gerontios, who is released on bail after having promised not to engage in any further secret or open relations with a certain woman named Theodora.[1330] Illicit relationships could have consequences for men, too, although it was a question of legal prosecution rather than reputation.

A papyrus from Antinooupolis in Egypt concerns a father who wants to disinherit his daughter after she has borne an illegitimate child, seemingly with a slave. The rhetoric is furious and wordy, but the eventual demand is to have the daughter rejected and disinherited, whereas indeed, ancient law, included in *Codex Justinianus*, permitted capital punishment for both the woman and the slave. Either the law code was not fully known or, which is more likely, there was no demand to apply it in full austerity.[1331] In the eyes of the law seduction of an unmarried girl was a serious matter, as was the abduction of a woman, and rape could be punishable by death.[1332] Some papyri contain complaints about attempts to abduct women for forced marriages. One man is accused of abducting a woman named Makaria, and another document is a request from a widow named Sophia in Theba, who accuses a certain Senouthes of throwing her into his prison after she refused to yield to him.[1333] The attempted seduction of a girl was considered outrageous and sinful, but literary sources indicate that, depending on the case, the situation was dealt with in various ways, not always involving legal intervention.[1334]

Given the strict moral attitudes, the false accusations against Anna, a noblewoman and widow having become a nun, of having had a sexual relationship with the holy man Stephen are efficacious. According to the story, the charges were made up by Stephen's Iconoclast opponents.[1335] Illicit intercourse with a nun was considered highly unlawful. Such accusations, therefore, together with the defiling aspect of a hermit succumbing to his lust, were meant to damage Stephen's reputation and his legal position.[1336] Contact among the nuns of the nearby convent, the holy man and the monks in his monastery must have been normal, and it would have been difficult to make accusations if the opportunity was lacking. Violating young girls and corrupting monastics constituted a *topos* describing a very malevolent person. Accusations of being a violator of young

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[1329] *Stud. Pal*. X 252, l. 16-18 (dated to the 6th century). Beaucamp 1992, 81-2.

[1330] *BGU* II 401 (dated to AD 618). Beaucamp 1992, 82.

[1331] *P. Cair. Masp.* I 67097v D (dated between 567-570). Beaucamp 1992, 79-81.

[1332] Beaucamp 1990, 114-121. Earlier law protected women in various degrees. A new aspect of *Codex Justinianus* was that all women, regardless of social position, were protected. At the same time the law wanted to prevent girls, under the pretence of abduction, from eloping to marry a man without parental consent. Beaucamp notes that one question for the laws on abduction was concern about the ethics of sexuality.

[1333] *P. Oxy.* XVI 1837 (6th c.) and *P. Cair. Masp*. I 67005 (from AD 567). Beaucamp 1992, 73.

[1334] See Beaucamp 1992, 339-341 for instances of the seduction of girls, the abduction and rape of women, and actions taken in response to such incidents.

[1335] *Life of St. Stephen the Younger,* 21, 32 (*Migne, PG* 100:1125D-1132D) (relates to the 2nd half of the 8th century). Kazhdan & Talbot 1991/1992, 394-5, Talbot 1985, 3. See Chapter III.D, 140, and also, II.E., 94 n. 543.

[1336] Cf. Nikephoros, *Brev*. 80, 83, who does not mention Anna, but states that some monks succumbed to pressure from iconoclast persecutors under Constantine V. They quit the monasteries, put on lay habits, had intercourse with women and married. Others, not giving in, received the dishonouring punishment during the games in the Hippodrome of walking in a procession, each monk holding a nun by the hand while being insulted by the crowd.

girls and corrupting monastics is added to the list of crimes in three papyri from Egypt, in which villagers complain about violations of the community by some dignitaries.[1337] Agathias' intention, describing in his *History* how the Hunnic tribes marching on Constantinople took captive and raped not only married women but also nuns, was to underline the barbarity and terror of the Huns.[1338]

Compared with the prevailing moral and legal views, some of the poems mentioned above give a slightly broader perspective on social conduct. This ambivalence between morality and social reality, in which options for sexual partners extended beyond wives and prostitutes, is indicated in the aforementioned poem by Agathias, which lists the main categories of women in society and contemplates the effects of a sexual relationship with each type.[1339] Presumably, at least some individuals in these categories were available as partners. The only category not mentioned in the poem is that of monastics, which again indicates the strong interdiction against such relationships. The poem, in its way, exposes both the moral temper and jurisprudence of early Byzantine society. It reflects in an apt manner the ambivalent attitudes towards sexual relationships and women in the urban society of the 6th century. In combination these sources show that there was social and cultural opportunity for contact over gender boundaries.

B. Displaying the female body

Despite ideals of concealment, the source material contains expositions about the female figure, either physically present or artistically represented, being seen, admired or evaluated.[1340] Garments, accessories, adornments and regalia, or the lack of them, are significant in terms of signalling social position in life and in art, and also help individuals to take on a role or to live up to ideals under the scrutinising gaze of others. The focus in the following is on physical appearance and its public display.

A young, unmarried girl could not be praised for her virtues as a wife and mother, but there were ideals of beauty to refer to and the ideal of good behaviour governed by a favourable mind.[1341] A funeral poem by Paulos Silentiarios for a girl who died at the age of twelve illustrates this:

> Maiden, thy parents with sorrowing hands made thy funeral, not thy wedding bed.
> The errors of life and the labour of childbed thou hast escaped,
> but a bitter cloud of mourning sits on them.

[1337] *P. Cair. Masp*. I 67004, l. 16, *P. Cair. Masp*. I 67002 III, l. 2, *P. Lond.* V 1674, l. 62 (all dated to AD 567-568). Beaucamp 1992, 71.

[1338] Agathias, *Hist.* V:3:2-4.

[1339] *Anth. Gr.,* V:302, cited in full in Chapter II.E, 94-5.

[1340] Messis 2006, 378-88, an interesting discussion on Byzantine concepts of female beauty, noting the paradoxical attitude to real beauty as coming from inside & something that has to be kept in the private domain, while there was an emphasis on female beauty & the prestige that a beautiful woman gave a man. Cf. Constantinou 2005, 13-4, 46-7, 66-73, on sainthood as a social role that is performed through the outer signs meant to be observed, and on female 'good' natural beauty and 'bad' sinful beauty, both being 'observed' in the lives of female saints.

[1341] Messis 2006, 387-8, notes that the description of beauty or unattractiveness in Byzantine sources is a coded message with metaphors of sympathy or antipathy, including the moral evaluation of an individual.

> For Fate hath hidden thee, Macedonia, aged but twelve,
> young in beauty, old in behaviour.[1342]

The emphasis on beauty in Byzantine society is demonstrated in recurring stories of bridal shows from the middle-Byzantine period during which a bride for the Emperor, hence the future Empress, was chosen.[1343] These belong to a later cultural phase, but earlier periods had their fair share of fixation on appearance. Empress Theodora was said to have captured Justinian with her beauty, which lifted her from a humble position to imperial dignity. From an earlier century, Empress Eudocia, originally named Athanaïs, captured the heart of Theodosius II with her beauty. She was also praised for her intellect, having acquired some learning as the daughter of an Athenian philosopher, combining the ideals of beauty and an educated mind.

Other examples of the focus on beauty are to be found in John Malalas' chronicle. In a Byzantine manner he merges mythology and history, and his accounts are to be considered with some caution, but he gives an interesting sight into the Byzantine mind set of the 6th century. Any mention of women from the past or from mythology tends to include a comment on their looks and other virtues.[1344] For example, "Tauros took Europa to his own land and made her his wife since she was a virgin and beautiful".[1345] On the subject of Perseus, he mentions his going to the temple of Poseidon: "he entered and saw a girl, a virgin known as Andromeda", and continues: "Perseus dragged her away from the temple, ravished her because of her beauty and made her his wife".[1346] On recalling the story of Anthony and Cleopatra he notes that "Cleopatra was short but very beautiful, and had mystic knowledge".[1347] As for Helen of Troy, he describes her as "well grown, with a good figure and good breasts; she was white as snow, with good eyebrows, a good nose, good features, curly fairish hair, and large eyes; she was charming with a lovely voice".[1348] From the notes on Cleopatra and Helen, combined with remarks in other sources on Theodora's good looks, it could be concluded that a tall, slender stature in women was appreciated as a model of beauty, same as today. The somewhat later text by Anna Comnena, the *Alexiad* from the early 12th century, contains descriptions that Connor refers to as "a checklist for the Byzantine ideal of beauty". They include references, in this order, to a woman's height, skin, the shape of her face, complexion, eyes and

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[1342] *Anth. Gr.* VII:604 (by Paulos Silentiarios, 6th century) (translated by W.R. Patton, 1948-60).

[1343] According to sources, imperial bridal shows were held five times between 788 and 882, see Garland 1999, 5, Herrin 2001, 132-8, Vinson 2004, 105. Messis 2006, 383-4 presents opposing scholarly views that see these stories either as historically based or as pure literary *topos*. Cf. Constantinou 2005, 25-6, 46-7, for the legend of the 4th-century martyr Catherine of Alexandria (the Greek text dates to the 6th or the first half of the 7th century), according to which Emperor Maxentius is captivated by her beauty and offers to marry her. The emphasis on physical appearance is also evident from punishments involving mutilation, specifically the slitting of the nose, which not only constantly exhibited the humiliation of the punished, but also removed beauty and balance from the face.

[1344] These verbal portraits had ancient forerunners, but the wordings seem to be Malalas' own: see Jeffreys & Jeffreys 1990, *passim*, who provide a list of personal attributes used in his text.

[1345] Malalas, *Chron.* 2.8 [31] (translated by Jeffreys et al. 1986).

[1346] Malalas, *Chron.* 2.15 [36].

[1347] Malalas, *Chron.* 9.10 [219].

[1348] Malalas, *Chron.* 5.1 [91].

eyebrows.[1349] Given that respectable women were supposed to cover much of themselves in public, respectful descriptions naturally focus on general appearance and facial features. Malalas' 6th-century verbal portraits of females, although generally following the same pattern, are occasionally slightly broader, as his remarks on stature, facial features, eyes, eyebrows, nose and skin colour are complemented with remarks on hair, neck, feet and even the breasts of some historic beauty from long ago.[1350]

Several *topoi* for ideal female beauty feature in the following poem:

> A rose requires no wreath,
> and thou, my lady, no robes, nor hair-cauls set with gems.
> Pearls yield in beauty to thy skin,
> and gold has not the glory of thy uncombed hair.
> Indian jacynth has the charm of sparkling splendour,
> but far surpassed by that at thy eyes.
> Thy dewy lips and the honeyed harmony of thy breasts
> are the magic cestus of Venus itself.
> By all those I am utterly vanquished,
> and am comforted only by thy eyes which kind hope makes his home.[1351]

Fairness of skin and golden hair are presented as ideals, with facial features once again in the foreground.[1352]

Men were also conscious of their physical appearance and of attractive self-representation. The hair was important and a focal point also when male appearance was evaluated. Several poems by Paulos Silentiarios tell tales about the vanity of men regarding their appearance, especially in grooming their hair to be attractive to women, even curling it to last for three days, or worrying about lost looks and greyness.[1353] Corippus, referring to a certain Narses, remarks that his hair was well arranged.[1354] Conversely, it is mentioned at one point in the *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon* that the holy man mortified himself so hard that his hair was without lustre and was infested with worms.[1355] The assembled bishops at the Council in *Trullo* found reason to write a canon scolding men who took undue care of their hair to beautify it for surrounding beholders, and so present a

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[1349] Connor 2004, 252. Cf. Messis 2006, 363, 365-8, 393-5, 391 on female and male beauty in Byzantium, noting that physical beauty, focussing on detail and features, was characteristic of discourse on the female, whereas male beauty was generally discussed in terms of general appearance, posture and behaviour.

[1350] See the list of attributes in Jeffreys & Jeffreys 1990, 232-40.

[1351] *Anth. Gr.*, V:270 (by Paulos Silentiarios, 6th century) (translated by W.R. Patton, 1948-60).

[1352] On polarisation on a physical level (black=man / white=woman), in which female beauty is characterised by blondness, see Messis 2006, 376, but also on the moral implications of the symbolic black and white, according to which blondness could also be presented as a positive characteristic of male appearance.

[1353] *Anth. Gr.*, V:228, 264, 281, VI:71 (by Paulos Silentiarios)

[1354] Corippus, *In laud.*, III:220ff.

[1355] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 20.

temptation.[1356] Physical appearance was of significance in Byzantine society, and was used as a sign in different ways.

Despite ideals aimed at keeping women concealed, female beauty was a reason for pride. According to Messis, men, regardless of age and stature, loved marrying beautiful women, as it reflected the social image of the husband implying prestige in the inter-male clique. He therefore sees a dichotomy in Byzantine attitudes to female beauty:

> Pour les hommes, la beauté féminine doit se plier à deux exigences majeures: a. être d'abord une affaire privée avec une implication publique strictement limitée, car dangereuse pour l'ordre sociale, b. être ensute instumentalisée dans l'antagonisme et les jeux du prestige entre les hommes.[1357]

He reflects on the contradiction and play between private and public, hidden and revealed: a wife ideally should be unseen, whereas a husband could still proudly boast with her beauty.[1358]

Interaction between concealment and exposure as part of the display of the female body is evident in early Byzantine art and literature. There is one example in some illustrations in the *Wiener Genesis*. Rebecca is depicted at the well in two consecutive pictures, appropriately attired according to contemporary ideology of female self-representation for an unmarried maiden, while near the water a half-naked female figure reclines, supposedly representing some kind of art work of a water nymph decorating the site (Figs. 5a and b).[1359] The figure has typical features of ideal beauty, including a fair skin and blonde hair, whereas Rebecca is depicted virtuously veiled and in a long dress with sleeves that shows nothing other than her hands and face. The female figure of a water nymph can be compared with descriptions by Christodorus of Thebes of ancient statues decorating the famous baths of Zeuxippos in Constantinople.[1360] Among them are at least three images of Aphrodite in different states of nudity, as well as many male and female mythological personalities. Other poems also indicate that such statuary decorated public baths, such as the statue of Hermaphrodite in a baths catering for both men and women.[1361]

There are other literary descriptions of now vanished public art similar to the description of statues in the baths of Zeuxippos. Procopius of Gaza describes a set of wall paintings in a public building in Gaza, which was probably commissioned in the early 6th century or possibly in the last

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[1356] *Trullo*, 97.

[1357] Messis 2006, 281.

[1358] Messis 2006, 281-2, 387.

[1359] *Cod. Vindob. Theol. Graec*. 31, fol. 7 r & v. Cf. Constantinou 2005, 68 on the opposite way of presentation of naked female bodies in female saints' lives, where the pure female body (a tortured virgin martyr or a sanctified repentant sinner) appears naked in some situations, whereas prostitutes are never depicted naked in the texts.

[1360] *Anth. Gr.*, Book II (by Christodorus of Thebes, written during the rule of Anastasios I, 491-518). The baths and statues were destroyed by fire during the Nika revolt in 532, Procopius, *Bell.* 1.24.9, but the baths were later rebuilt: Emperor Philippikos is reported bathing there in the early 8th century, Theophanes, *Chron.* 6205 [AD 712/3].

[1361] *Anth. Gr.*, IX:783 (by an anonymous author), see above, 207 n. 1310. Cf. *Trullo,* 100 (691/2), condemning the creation of images that could arouse lust, thereby witnessing their existence. See also Herrin 1992, 103.

years of the 5th century.[1362] These paintings portrayed Theseus taking a daytime nap in his palace in Athens, while Phaidra sits next to him attended by her old nurse, two other female servants and a young servant girl bringing her mistress's jewellery box. Three male servants recline in different postures on the other side of the bed on which the master of the house reposes. The large picture contains four smaller 'pictures inside the picture', one illustrating Hippolythos killing the lion, the three others showing Theseus with the Minotaur and Ariadne helping him. A second large picture shows Hippolythos' and Daphne's chaise and Phaidra's old nurse being punished for having brought bad tidings. Two countrywomen are in the background. Four smaller pictures have motives from the Iliad, the last one of Paris and Helena.[1363] Some descriptions of historical and mythological figures in Malalas' chronicle are also assumed to be based on contemporary paintings or other art renderings the author would have seen in Antioch.

Many female bodies in public art are what one could call 'artistic body', in other words they do not portray live women, but mythology, ideas, ideals, personifications and aesthetic art. The classical tradition had a broad pallet, even making the liberal presentation of female nudity possible. The situation changed when art featured what were considered historical, especially religious, persons or contemporary individuals. Due consideration was given to decorum depending on the circumstances and the individuals concerned, including cultural signs of social status or marking the occasion. Several examples are to be found in the illustrations of the *Wiener Genesis*, among them the above-mentioned Rebecca at the well. The Rebecca of the Old Testament represented a respected historical person for contemporary Byzantines, and she is depicted according to prevailing codes for an unmarried maiden, whereas the same illustrations include the half-nude 'artistic body' of a nymph. Potiphar's wife, a woman of high social status, is depicted with all the marks of an aristocratic lady, in clear contrast to most other female figures in the manuscript, whereas servants, female musicians and mourners are depicted in accordance with the social codes or ideas of typical behaviour for such individuals (Figs. 1-5).[1364]

Maguire points out the interrelationship between literature and pictorial art in his discussion of different gestures of sorrow depicted in Middle Byzantine art. There is often a connection between the literary description and the artistic rendering, whereby the literary *topos* or literarily expressed moral and theological attitudes affect the way mourning is depicted in the paintings. For instance, the Old Testament figures in the funeral scenes in the *Wiener Genesis* display more violent signs and gestures of grief than is customary in New Testament illustrations with their more restrained gestures of sorrow in accordance with Christian theology. On the other hand, Maguire also points out the continuing tradition from Classical and Hellenistic Antiquity of expressing sorrow, grief and mourning in different ways. He gives as an example the more extreme and wild tearing of the hair and the clothes, beating the bare breasts and expressing loud lamentations, although he notes that

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[1362] Friedländer 1939, 95.

[1363] Procopius of Gaza, *Echphr.* § 2-4, 6-7, 10, 16-7, 20-3, 25, 28, 32, 41. Friedländer 1939, 25, 30, 36-7, 40, 50, 55-60, 62, 65, 69, 82, 85, & ill. XI and XII.

[1364] E.g. *Cod. Vindob. Theol. Graec*. 31, fol. 7 r & v, 13 v, 14 v, 16 r & v, 17 v, 20 v. Cf. Coptic figurative textiles with both mythological figures, often nudes, and religious representations: see Rutschowscaya 1990, *passim*, noting the gradual Christianisation of themes and a break with classical forms from the 6th century onwards, p. 40.

from the 6th century onwards lamenting women were shown only with loose hair and raised arms, and were seldom depicted with bare breasts. An opposite tradition of expressing grief was in silent weeping, drawing a garment, usually the mantel or a veil, half in front of the face so as to hide it. Examples of both are to be found in the *Wiener Genesis* illustrations. Maguire attaches different meanings and customary use to these expressions, although he does not discuss any gender differentiation.[1365] There clearly were different types of signs embedded in vestments, embellishments and personal behaviour (such as pose and expression), in other words in the general *habitus* of how individuals were presented or presented themselves to signal attitudes, emotions such as mourning, and social circumstances.

There were expectations of a certain type of bodily display for women in various social and cultural situation.[1366] A passage in the *Life of St. Matrona of Perge* shows that women were supposed to cover their heads during communion in church. When Matrona is revealed as a woman disguised as a monk the abbot asks her how she could have taken communion without her head covered, and she replied: "During the divine mysteries I have pulled my cloak halfway over my head, feigning a headache." Thus, she maintained the proper female approach to the divine even in male disguise.[1367] When she is revealed as a female she is given a piece of cloth with which to cover her head before leaving for separate quarters.[1368] Covering the head and hair was expected of women devotees, as well as of any respectable woman presenting herself in public, maidens of marriageable age and married women alike. Not only does Christodoros of Thebes in his description of statues in the Zeuxippos baths mention the veils when female statues have them, he also comments on the lack of hair covering or the way the hair is depicted loose, thereby describing old art objects in accordance

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[1365] Maguire 1977, *passim.* Discussing the gesture of drawing a garment in front of the face he mentions the statues of 'Hecuba' and 'Creusa' described by Christodorus of Thebes (*Anth. Gr.*, book II), see Chapter III.A, 114-5. Christodorus comments on these statues how they partial cover the face as a sign of mourning or sorrow, whereas describing the male figure of Clytius as twining his hands together as if in hidden sorrow. Maguire also discusses the different postures of the mourners depicted in the *Wiener Genesis* at the death of Deborah and the entombment of Rachel (*Cod. Vindob. Theol. Graec*. 31, fol. 13 v), and Jacob's death and burial (fol. 24 v). See Figs. 3 & 4 b.

[1366] Cf. Messis 2006, 403-405 on clothing as a social marker, distinguishing not only male and female, but also social class, rich and poor, the laity and monastics and ethnicity, for example. Garments even have importance in the Celestial sphere, saints in iconography being defined by their attire. Patlagean 1976, 608.

[1367] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge,* chapter 7. Cf. Kashdan 1998, 13-17 on male and female clothing, noting that although the way in which clothes were worn varied, the distinction was not very sharp: similar terminology could be used for male and female garments and, with some modification, a female's tunic could be changed into a male's. The total *habitus* constituted the recognisable deference, and the details might be shared. See Constantinou 2005, 104-106, 117-119 on saintly female cross-dressers: a person's full appearance (clothing, name, behaviour) defined social gender, and cross-dressing was more common in tales about women. See Barber 1990, 31-3 on religious transvestism. Casey 2013, 174-7. Sidéris 2003, 224-227, referring to ascetic transvestitism, notes that wearing male clothing did not suffice to pass as a man, and a rigorous ascetic life was needed to obliterate normal external female features. According to Messis 2006, 406-407, 409-412, male clothing could evoke certain empowerment in women. For a saintly woman it could be positive, whereas dressing in female clothes had negative connotations for men. He mentions cases of men disguised as women, usually to escape peril: a deacon, in Evagrius, *Hist. Eccl*. 3.34 [133]; inhabitants escaping from Constantinople during the civil strife in 742, Theophanes, *Chron*. 6235 [AD 742/3]; patriarch Germanus (715-730) escaping persecutors and hiding in a female convent, *Vie du patriarche Germain Ier* (ed. Lamaza, v. 301-3 [p. 222]).

[1368] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge,* chapter 9.

with contemporary interpretations.[1369] The Virgin Mary was, almost without exception, depicted with a veil, a detail that also features in Corippus' literary narration of a vision of her: "the Virgin, gliding down through the upper side of heaven, with merciful expression and happy in her chaste tread, her dusky hair veiled and with kind eyes, (the image of holy Piety, to judge from these signs)".[1370] Here the covered head is linked to the pious female body.

The *Lives of the eastern saints* shows Euphemia covering her head when going out to do her charity work,[1371] and the possessed woman Eirene throwing off her cape and covering as she rushes to verbally assault Theodore.[1372] These compare with illustrations in the *Wiener Genesis*, most of which depict the women in outdoor settings wearing a veil or a cloak over their head. The only exceptions are a statue of a water nymph, Eve expelled with Adam from Eden, and female mourners in funeral scenes. The female figures that do not have covered hair are servants or attendants and two musicians, all depicted indoors, both social status and location affecting the portrayal. Potiphar's wife, portrayed as an aristocratic lady, is depicted without any head cover when in private chambers trying to seduce Joseph, whereas she wears a light white veil when seated in a reception room discussing with men and accusing Joseph.[1373] Messis comments briefly on the use of a veil among women. The moral discussion on this topic falls into two phases of early comments by Church Fathers and then mostly nothing until a revival at the end of the 9th century.[1374] It is not always easy to judge how praxis followed ideals based on sources covering the 6th to the 8th centuries. Illustrations and literary narratives depict, at least, head covering in accordance with prevailing ideals. Two poems about a drawing of a girl named Theodora mention that the pen begrudges the beholder and has not revealed her full beauty, as the hair is concealed and covered.[1375] The veil was not the only possible head cover. A poem by Paul Silentiarios describes three ways for a woman to wear her hair: in a coil, covered with a sort of veil, and uncovered locks. Agathias' poem quoted

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[1369] *Anth. Gr.*, II , e.g. 'Amymone' "gathering up her unfilleted hair behind, while her face was unveiled"(Loeb, p.63-4), 'Aphrodite' "had bound her hair with a golden kerchief" (p.65), "the maiden Auge, her mantle thrown over her head and shoulders, for her hair was not done up with a kerchief", 'Cerusa' "had drawn her veil over both her cheeks" (p.71), 'Polyxena' "unhappy virgin /---/why dost thou draw thy veil over thy face" (p.75), 'Artemis' "her unsooded hair floated loose in the wind"(p.83). Another 'Aphrodite' (p.67), 'Cassandra' (p.73) and 'Oenone' (p.75) are the only female figures with no reference to hair, headdress, or lack of it.

[1370] Corippus, *In laud.* I:32f., (translated by A. Cameron).

[1371] John of Ephesus, *Lives*, chapter 12 (6th century) (Brock & Harvey, 1987, 126).

[1372] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 71 (the story is set in the last decades of the 6th century). See Chapter III.A, 107.

[1373] *Cod. Theol. graec*. 31, fol. 7 r & v ('statue' at well), fol. 1 r & v (Adam and Eve), fol. 13 v (death of Deborah and entombment of Rachel), fol. 24 v (Jacob's death and burial), fol. 14 r (Isaac's death), fol. 16 r (Potiphar's wife with escaping Joseph and female servants in the lower case), fol. 16 v (Potiphar's wife with attendant and other woman accusing Joseph to some men and guards), fol. 17 v (female musicians at a banquet). Female figures also in fol. 2 v, 4 r, 5 r & v, 8 v, 10 r & v, 11 r, 12 r, 13 r, 15 r & v, 17 r, 23 r, in half of all ill.

[1374] Messis 2006, 316-7, notes comment by Photios (*Lettres*, ed. Laourdas-Westerink, lettre 210, 32-37 et 43-44) on the demand for a woman to cover her head to honour the man. It is probably true that his promotion speeches in favour of the veil was a symptom of the decreasing use of head covering among women in an urban milieu.

[1375] *Anth. Gr.*, XVI:77-78 (the first by Paulos Silentiarios, possibly also the second, 6th century). The second poem mentions that the head is covered by a caul in the drawing. According to the *Loeb* edition this was probably the famous empress, but I do not think it likely. Theodora was a common name and an author would hardly be disrespectful enough to allude to the Empress as a mere girl.

below also mentions a patterned coif, a silver head-band, and a hair caul set with precious stones.[1376] Illustrations and mosaics also depict mantel worn like a shawl around the head, whereas aristocratic women are depicted with their hair set in elaborate styles covered with a jewelled head piece or a small cap, which might be the caul mentioned in the texts.[1377]

The illustrations in *Wiener Genesis* give a good general picture of female dress, indicating social differences and how women were supposed to present themselves in public space. A maiden such as Rebecca is depicted with a white veil covering her head, wearing a long-sleeved full-length simple dress over a white petticoat, and with red shoes as her only decoration. Figures that seemingly represent married women usually have a coloured mantle wrapped around the head and shoulders in the outdoor scenes, and a long dress either of a single colour or, in the case of women in a more prominent position decorated with small circles of what could symbolise embroidery and decoration such as found on Coptic textiles in Egypt.[1378] This poem by Agathias alludes to the difference in how maidens and married women dressed:

> This coif, bright with patterns worked in gold, I bring for thee, my bride to be.
> Set it on thy hair, and putting this tucker over thy shoulders,
> draw it round thy white bosom.
> Yea, pin it lower, that it may cincture thy breasts, wound close around thee.
> These wear as a maiden, but mayest thou soon be a matron with fair fruit of offspring,
> that I may get thee a silver head-band, and a hair-caul set with precious stones.[1379]

Differences in social status are similarly expressed in dress.[1380] Empress Theodora and her entourage are depicted in the Ravenna mosaic with signs and insignia, mostly taking the form of clothes and adornments as befitted the social status of each individual (Fig. 7a). The Empress has the most elaborate dress, mantle and jewellery, with a crown as well as a necklace resembling a regal collar and covered in gemstones. The other women display their prominence with their dresses of

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[1376] *Anth. Gr.*, V:260 (by Paulos Silentiarios, 6th century), "Does a caul confine your hair /---/. Do you wear nothing on your head, its flaxen locks /---/. If your hair let down and covered by a white kerchief, /---/ The three Graces dwell in the three aspects of your beauty, /---/". *Anth. Gr.*, V:276 (by Agathias Scholasticos).

[1377] Empress Theodora with her entourage in the San Vitale mosaic is a good example of aristocratic women, Deichmann 1958, Taf. 358, 360-1.

[1378] E.g. *Cod. Vindob. Theol. Graec*. 31, fol. 5 r (with a coloured plain dress & one decorated with circles near the hem), fol. 17 r (dress with circular decoration), see Figs. 4 b & 2 b. Cf. Thomas 2007, 149-151, with a general overview of research on Coptic and Byzantine textiles and of the most relevant publications. Gerstinger 1931, Taf. XXI, a Coptic tunic from the 6th-7th centuries (fig. 114) & a late Hellenistic Egyptian tunic from the 4th-5th centuries. Maguire 1990, fig. 25, a Coptic tunic with tapestry woven circular decorations. Rutschowscaya 1990, 16-7, 26-7, 44-5, 50-1, 60-1, 81, 91, 103-8, 112-7, 133, Coptic decorative textile of the 5th-7th centuries.

[1379] *Anth. Gr.*, V:276 (by Agathias Scholasticus) (translated by W.R. Patton, 1948-60). Cf. Herrin 2013, 85.

[1380] Cf. Bräuer 1997, 75-76, 84 on symbols, marks (token) and attributes, and the identificatory and symbolic aspects of different objects (e.g. clothes and accessories). Tokens & marks are assigned by the authority, whereas attributes derive from the social sphere of individuals, although both are meant to indicate group membership or the social/civic status of the bearer. The aim is to signify distinction to those not in the same category, and they only have significance if they are displayed for others to see. Cf. Delbrueck 1929, 34-5, 40, 54-6.

expensive material and jewelled headdresses.[1381] Although not entirely similar in attire, they are of the same social rank as Pothifar's wife in the *Wiener Genesis* (Fig.1), in other words ladies of the nobility.[1382] They could all be compared with the picture of Anicia Juliana on the frontispiece of the manuscript she commissioned (Fig. 6).[1383] A somewhat later example is a small manuscript illustration of Job and his daughter. The women wear imperial dresses and the illustration has been interpreted as being based on portraits of Emperor Heraklios, his daughters and the Empress Martina.[1384] Female saints might be depicted in the elaborate garments of ladies of the court. Examples include the row of female saints in the mosaic in S. Apollinare Nuovo, and the portraits of female saints (Fig. 7b) on mosaic medallions with male saints adorning one of the arches in the chapel of the Archbishop's palace, both in Ravenna and dating to the 6th century.[1385] Some mosaics in St. Demetrios in Thessaloniki, in turn, give an idea of how pious women of the city elite dressed (Fig. 11).[1386]

Different types of *habitus* (in terms of dress, posture and expression) typified the types of female body represented in art, both in manuscript illustrations and in mosaics, wall paintings and sculptures in public space. The 'artistic body' leaned on classical tradition, whereas depictions of contemporary and historical figures took into account social norms and customs regarding dress and behaviour, the concurrent fashion affecting both. The difference is evident not only in the pictures of Rebecca at the well, her 'historic body' being contrasted to the 'artistic body' of the nymph. The portrait of Anicia Juliana, flanked by personifications of Magnanimity and Prudence, illustrates the difference more subtly (Fig. 6). The latter two are commendably dressed as suits their nature, but the one on the right especially, with her long white tunic and simple jewelled headband, contrasts with Anicia Juliana, whose headdress and garment clearly follow the fashion adopted by imperial and aristocratic women.[1387] Most representations of female saints concurred with the patterns for contemporary persons as they were conceived of as historical individuals. There were also differences depending on social status or the occasion. Female musicians, servants and attendants are in sleeveless tunics and without a head covering in the *Wiener Genesis* illustrations, whereas female mourners with their occasionally wild appearance, loose hair, desperate hand gestures and uncontrolled grief deviate from the usual, more modest depictions of women (Figs. 2-4).

Religious texts frequently highlight the need for modesty in vestments and physical

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[1381] Deichmann 1958, Taf. 358, 360-1.

[1382] *Cod. Theol. graec*. 31, fol. 16 r & v. Cf. 6th-century painting of Lady Theodosia in her grave in Antinoopolis, Rutschowscaya 1990, 51. See Beaucamp 1990, 271-278, & Beaucamp 1992, 309-311 on the wife of a consul sharing his status by wearing certain insignia, also Chapter II.E, 92, V.B,191. Barber 1990, 34-36 points out with regard to the San Vitale mosaic that, whereas the men wear the official insignia of their offices on their garments, the women do not, and cannot: the Empress's modified version of imperial symbols is an exception. Given the sharp distinction between males and females in Byzantine society, it is hardly to be expected that the respective signs of rank would be the same: for women they tended to be unofficial attributes rather than official insignia.

[1383] *Cod.Vindob.Med.Gr.* 1, fol. 6 v (early 6th century).

[1384] Neapel, Biblioteca Nazionale, *Cod. (Copt.) I, B. 18,* fol. 4 v. Gerstinger 1931, Taf. XXII, fig. 116, and Spatharakis 1976, 14-20 and fig. 5. See also, V.B, 188.

[1385] Deichmann 1958, Abb. 128-35, 238-41, Deichmann 1969, 199, Deichmann 1974, 204.

[1386] Cormack 1969, Plates 3-5, 7-9. On their representing the city elite, see Brubaker 2004b, 86, 89.

[1387] Cf. e.g. Delbrueck 1929, 34-5, 54-6.

presentation. The Council in *Trullo* produced a canon forbidding the custom among some women intent on becoming nuns of displaying rich dresses when they entered into the monastery and approached the altar, and only there to change into the dark monastic garment.[1388] Early Church Fathers such as John Chrysostom also lash out at women of the laity who flaunt themselves in expensive garments and jewellery in church, thereby flouting religious ideals of simplicity and disregard for worldly beauty, which emphasise natural beauty without external embellishment and shining from the inside. Theodoros of Stoudios praises his mother for not having set her daughter the example of wearing feminine tresses, bracelets or purple garments.[1389] Saints' lives tend to accentuate pious neglect of the physical body. The *Life of St. Matrona* provides an example: "How, after her marriage, she was humble and moderate, taking no care whatsoever for the adornments and cosmetics that worldly women are accustomed to use, cultivating instead manners of piety and prudence; and how she neglected all indulgence of the body".[1390] Simplicity, the lack of embellishment and bareness in its extreme are described in the *Life of St. Mary of Egypt*. When the monk Zosimas meets the formerly licentious Mary who had been living an ascetic life in the desert for decades, he encounters a tarnished, naked figure, her gender no longer clearly distinguishable. The body of the now saintly woman lacks any kind of gown or garment and is even stripped of all typical feminine features.[1391] Every embellishment of feminine beauty is removed to the ultimate extent of total exposure. Even so, modesty requires Mary to ask Zosimas to give her his outer garment as cover for her body during their meeting.[1392]

Religious narration such as this further verifies that external beauty was an important feature in secular society. Another indication is the recurring reference to personal beauty when people are being praised.[1393] Even religious texts expressed appreciation of embellishment and beauty connected to the afterlife and divine visions. The text describing Matrona at the end of her life is an example: "when sleep had overcome her, she thought herself in a garden, with green grass and a grove, adorned with many divers trees. And then she was just inside a splendid house, illuminated by the purest light, and there was a woman in it, and she was clothed in imperial garments and arrayed with all manner of beauty."[1394] Other secular examples emphasise external appearance. The above-mentioned poems 'advertising' public baths stress the enhanced physical attraction bathing there will bestow.[1395] The richly embellished aristocratic women in illustrations and mosaics also

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[1388] *Trullo*, 45. Cf. Herrin 1992, 100.

[1389] Theod. Stoud., *Laudatio*, §4.

[1390] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge,* chapter 2. (translated by Nicholas Constas).

[1391] *Life of St. Mary of Egypt*, chapter10. Cf. Talbot 1985, 10, Kazhdan & Talbot 1991/1992, 403-4, Herrin 1984, 179-80, Talbot 2001, 14-16, Patlagean 1976, 609. See Constantinou 2005, 60-1, 85-7 for a similar tale about the repentant actress Pelagia in Antioch, later living as a hermit in Jerusalem & taken for a holy eunuch (5th century).

[1392] *Life of St. Mary of Egypt*, chapter12. Cf. Casey 2013, 174.

[1393] Several funeral poems underline the beauty of the person, e.g. *Anth Gr.,* VII:222 (by Cyrus the Poet, 5th or 6th century), VII:593 (by Agathias Scholasticus, 6th c), VII:600-1 (by the prefect Julianus of Egypt, 6th century), VII:604 (by Paulos Silentiarios, 6th century). Corippus, *In laud.*, II:70ff, makes a point of remarking on the beauty of both Empress Sophia and her daughter. Tributes to beauty were not restricted to women, cf. Corippus, *In laud*., III:220: Narses is described as tall and handsome in form and face.

[1394] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 49. (translated by Nicholas Constas).

[1395] *Anth. Gr.*, IX:621-2 (anonymous). Cf. Messis 2006, 381 on the difficult-to-date gynaecological treatise

reflect the importance of adornments when appearing in public as signals of wealth and rank.[1396] Jewellery could also have religious significance, worn as an amulet and symbolising prayer for spiritual protection or blessing, used by the wearer for others to see. These included pendants, bracelets and wedding rings embellished with Christian imagery (Fig.12).[1397] On a secular level, imperial gold coins were thought to have protective powers, and both real and imitation coins were incorporated as amulets into jewellery and accessories displayed by both men and women, especially during the 6th and 7th centuries.[1398]

A story in the *Miraculi St. Demetrii* attests to the importance of jewellery displayed on a woman. A long siege brought famine to the city of Thessaloniki. Finally, ten warships filled with provisions sent by the Emperor reached the harbour, but the seamen were greedy and took advantage of the situation asking high prices for the food. To stress the severity of the situation the writer tells of how the inhabitants brought not only their gold as payment, but also their bedsheets and garments, and were even forced to remove the earrings from their wives, listed in that order.[1399] Hence, the depriving a woman of her earrings was done as a last resort, and only in extreme conditions. There are several possible reasons for this. The jewellery could have been the property of the woman, which the man normally had no legal right to use; a woman's jewellery might have been considered the family's reserve wealth only to be used as a last resort; or jewellery was significant in terms of displaying the family's wealth and prestige. All three explanations are probably intertwined. In any case, inherent in a woman's jewellery was an element of social display, the idea being that it that it was supposed to be seen. Earrings made from precious metals were common in the period (Fig. 12).[1400]

The story of Matrona also shows how pierced ears and the wearing of earrings were associated with women. Disguised as a monk, she was working with a brother in the monastery garden who became suspicious about her pierced earlobes. To avoid recognition as a woman she concocted a story about a former mistress having dressed up her eunuch (the identity Matrona had as a beardless male in the monastery) in jewellery and finery, so that many thought he was a girl.[1401]

A story in the *Life of St. John the Almsgiver* complements the one in *Miraculi St. Demetrii*. Distributors of alms and food to refugees arriving in Alexandria from Syria complain to the patriarch

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'*Metrodora*', which includes a chapter giving cosmetic advice, such as how to enhance beauty and become a beautiful woman to attract a man (thus revealing male attitudes to female beauty). Advice included keeping the thighs slim, straight and free from hair, how to whiten the face and eliminate hair growth and how to emit a desirable body odour (*Metrodora*, ed. Kouzis, p. 56-7).

[1396] Cf. Cameron 2006a, 125.

[1397] See e.g. Yeroulanou 2000, 227-8, 232-4, Pl. 172, 181, 183, Maguire 2000, 279-85, Vassilaki (ed.) 2000, 290-2, 294-5, Cat. nos. 10, 11, & 13, Piatnitsky et al. 2000, 55-6, Cat. nos. B13b, d & f. See Vikan 1984, 77-85 on jewellery such as amulets for securing health, fertility and protection from female ailments.

[1398] Maguire 1997, 1041-4, and figs. 4, 7, 8, 11. Piatnitsky et al. 2000, 55-6, Cat. nos. B13c & e.

[1399] *Mir. St. Dem*. II chapter 4 [251]. See Chapter IV.D, 168.

[1400] Cf. earrings of the 7th century in the National Museum in Athens (No. 510), Petrakos 1990, 127, fig. 110, and earrings dated to the 6th century in Piatnitsky et al. 2000, 55-7, Cat. nos. B13a & B14.

[1401] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 5. Cf. Constantinou 2005, 105. See Ringrose 2003, 65, 80, on the ambiguity of eunuchs exploited by women disguising themselves as men. Cf. *Vita Tarasii*, § 66, in which women dress as eunuchs so as to approach the bishop's grave in the monastery for healing purposes.

that some women begging for supplies wore ornaments and bracelets, but they are told to give help to everyone who asks without questioning, in accordance with the commandments of Christ.[1402] These women did not have to exchange ornaments for food. Men also displayed their status and wealth through garments and jewellery. The story of St. Theodore of Sykeon tells of how, when he was a six-year-old boy, his mother purchased fine clothes, jewellery and a golden belt for him to wear because she planned to take him to Constantinople to serve with the Emperor: these items obviously were important attributes, possibly even requirements for such a position.[1403]

Scattered remnants of real jewellery from this period are a further indication of its social function. At least from the 7th century onwards the economy was in decline, but the jewellery of the period still tended to be relatively large in size and lavish, although not necessarily of great value. Museum collections contain bracelets that, although large in size, are hollow inside: splendour with less expense on precious metal. Similarly, earrings or medallions are made of thin sheet metal and plates of gold, or have an intriguing pierced lace pattern, which again facilitates display of splendour despite economy in terms of material (Fig.12). A further cost-cutting from of ornamentation was to use semi-precious stones or even glass as decorative elements. Gold jewellery seemed to be less abundant during the 8th and 9th centuries, silver being the preferred medium.[1404] Despite the economic decline, the display of status through female jewellery seemed to continue: people found ways of having lavish jewellery with minimal use of expensive metal and other materials.

As always, there must have been a connection between representations of beauty in art and literature and the women in society, the influences going both ways: women tried to emulate ideals, whereas contemporary fashion and social self-representation affected artistic portrayals. That women were represented in many ways through art is clear. Official portraits of imperial ladies were present in the form of statues, mosaics and paintings, but there were also 'artistic bodies' portraying mythological figures or different types of personification within the classical tradition. The religious sphere offered many and varied female renderings, from the Virgin Mary to female saints and martyrs, as well as Biblical personae. Poetry hints at the existence of portraits and images of famous female artists and courtesans. Although idealistic in many ways, both the literature and artefacts such as statuary, paintings and mosaics reflected current cultural ideas on the presence and presentation of the female body in various social circumstances in public space.

[1402] *Life of St. John the Almsgiver,* chapter 7. See Chapter IV.D, 169 n. 1052.

[1403] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 5. Chapter 12 tells of how the young Theodore, rejecting worldly wealth, removes his golden belt, necklaces and bracelet, returning them to his mother. Cf. Cormack 1985, 42-3.

[1404] Jewellery from the 6th to the 8th century is displayed in various museum collections such as in the British Museum, (cf. e.g. Loverance 1988, 18 fig. 19, 34 fig. 42, and inside the front cover), and the Benaki Museum (golden bracelet from the 6th-century, golden wedding rings from the 6th-7th centuries, crescent-shaped earrings from the 7th century), and the Dumbarton Oaks Collection. See also, Crawford 1990, fig. 97, 122, 145-6, 416, Davidson 1952, no. 1830-32, 1860-63, 1925-29, 2030, 2036-37, Foss & Magdalino 1977, 119, Russell 1982, nr.38-42, Waldbaum 1983, no. 721-9, 734-5, 737-40, 746-7, 756-9, 821, 827, 831-4, 841-2, 853-4, 857, 862-3, 866, 870, 889-90, 892, 899.

VII Female visibility and presence: expectations and exceptions

The focus in the previous chapters is on the ideological framework and the social context, and the public activities and presence of women are considered from different angles. This chapter discusses the dynamics between the ideological level and female movability, visibility and presence in public space. Gender segregation and the place granted women in public space are considered in relation to each other.

Traditional principles of female behaviour embraced ideas such as passivity, minimal visibility, exclusion from public activities and behaviour that could be characterised as chaste and prudent. Nevertheless, women were not always passive actors or mere players within a domestic sphere, but were involved on many levels in the more public sides of society. The focus in this chapter is on the social mechanisms of female presence and movement in public space. Female behaviour occasionally seemed to stray from set social codes, but this does not mean that such rules and codes were discarded. It is a question of interpreting the guidelines, working within the precincts of social rules, stretching the possibilities inside given boundaries, and working with them on a functional level. Social codes guide individuals to keep within validated society, within the social acceptance of other members. A balance between codes and conduct is maintained when actions fall within the limits of social tolerance. Nevertheless, some individuals, for one reason or another, live on the fringes of accepted society, or as outcasts.

There has been discussion among scholars concerning the extent to which women were confined in their houses, and what the occasionally mentioned women's quarters (*gynaikeion*) were and the extent of their occurrence. Talbot finds it hard to imagine that poorer families with restricted living space could assign special areas to women only, whereas aristocratic houses probably had special quarters designated for the use of the women in the family.[1405] On the other hand, one could think of modern housing in Middle Eastern countries: even smaller dwellings might be divided into more open and more private parts, guests being received in the living room, while women withdraw to private areas.[1406] Similar social behaviour, albeit with no specifically designated women's quarters, is perceptible in Byzantine society, although there are very few clues about practices in ordinary families. The *Life of St.Philaretos* gives some hints, however: envoys seeking imperial brides are welcomed in one part of the house, only later to be allowed in the rooms in which the women reside to meet potential candidates.[1407] There is also evidence in the source material that aristocratic women had private quarters. Issues related to space occupied by women's activities in Byzantium were discussed at a colloquium held at Dumbarton Oaks in the late 1990s.[1408] As part of his contribution Kazhdan argued that, at least in later centuries, there were no clearly defined women's quarters *(gynaikeion)*. Private rooms and quarters for women existed in houses and residences, but not in the sense that women were strictly confined to them. As he stated: "the only

[1405] Talbot 1997, 129-30, see also a discussion on female confinement to the household. See Chapter II.A, 60-62.
[1406] Personal experience of the author during archaeological expeditions to Petra, Jordan in 1997-2001.
[1407] Cf. *Life of St.Philaretos*, 4.c. Rydén 2002, 89. See Chapter II.A, 61-2.
[1408] The proceedings were published in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 52, 1998. Cf. also Talbot 1998, 123.

conclusion we may risk is that neither archaeology nor written texts confirm the existence of a Byzantine gynaeceum - they compel us neither to deny nor to accept its existence."[1409]

An often-occurring assumption is that women in Byzantine society were more or less confined to the house, given only few socially acceptable opportunities to venture outside the domestic sphere and to mingle beyond the family circle. Some scholars give the impression that such opportunities involved, for the most part, only visits to sanctuaries and church services, or charity work.[1410] However, as Talbot acknowledges in a later article, practices probably varied widely depending on social class and civil status.[1411] The higher the class the more controlled the women's movements outside the house seemed to be, compared to women in lower classes or peasant women. There was definitely an ideal, if not always strictly practised, according to which young unmarried maidens were kept inside the house and out of sight until they were married.[1412] On the other hand, it is clear from the sources that women did venture outside strictly domestic space, not only in exceptional circumstances such as during earthquakes or war, but also for normal participation in social, cultural and economic activities.[1413] The confinement of Byzantine women to the house and their isolation therefore constitute a modern scholarly '*topos*', to some extent, pronouncements of ideology and ideal situations being sometimes taken at face value as praxis. Kazhdan is of the opinion that the supposed confinement was essentially a pious ideal, as it is clear that women were active in society outside the home.[1414] Nevertheless, one has to keep in mind that these ideals existed and were followed at least to some extent. Major factors defining the boundaries of behaviour thus seemed to include civil status, social class and the character of the social occasions in question.

The home and the household undoubtedly represented the primary female milieu. For many women this was probably the sphere in which they spent most of their time, but this does not exclude their participation in activities outside domestic space. Female presence in public space certainly paled in proportion to that of the male population, and had its own characteristics, but, as shown above, women were involved in the public side of society.

A. Boundaries of female movability

There were both public space and social occasions that without question gave women a legitimate reason to venture out of the house. These included church services and other religious functions. Women celebrated saints' feast days, visited holy sites and shrines as well as holy men and women,

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[1409] Kazhdan 1998, 2-10 (quote p. 10).
[1410] E.g. Talbot 1994, 105, Herrin 1983, 68, and Herrin 1984, 171.
[1411] Talbot 1997, 129.
[1412] See the discussion in Chapter II.A, 60-62, and II.E, 86-7, 93.
[1413] Cf. Talbot 1997, 129-30, 132, Talbot 1994, 105: several excuses were used for women to venture outside the home, such as social events, the baths and different religious activities. Beaucamp 1992, 289-90. Garland 2006, 165, is of the opinion that women, especially those in the lower classes, were always part of street life in Constantinople.
[1414] Kazhdan 1998, 5, 16.

and engaged in charitable activities.[1415] All women seem to have had the opportunity to frequent the baths under the right conditions, without it being considered inappropriate.[1416] Abnormal conditions changed usual patterns of behaviour that temporarily transgressed the customary limits of female movability in public. Earthquakes, war and famine were exceptional circumstances and normal discretion was waived for the sake of survival. Other situations were more ambivalent, the degree or mode of participation varying depending on the woman's social position. This applied to participation in festivities, visiting fairs and gathering in the street to look at some marvel such as a magnificent wooden structure erected for Justin II's accession celebrations.[1417] Some occasions and places were only suitable for commoners.[1418] Taking part in work and business in the city were not appropriate for women of the high classes. What was considered suitable company and the manner in which a woman appeared in public also depended on her social status. The level of approval or disapproval further depended on the narrator of the events. Religious writers and ecclesiastical authors could scorn behaviour that was not as harshly judged by secular society. There were also, of course, public places and actions that were only fit for women who already had a questionable moral reputation.

The account of an earthquake in Constantinople referred to at the beginning of this study is indicative of both expectations and exceptions. Agathias' comments point to the restrictions the normal social code placed on the movement in public of women of the higher classes.[1419] Aristocratic and imperial ladies moving outside the house or the palace were usually appropriately accompanied. The sources provide various indications of this. Corippus remarks on Sophia's nightly walk to the palace accompanied only by her husband, the future Emperor Justin II, and some senators, that she was without the company of "her usual crowd".[1420] It is uncertain exactly what this meant, but it probably refers to her entourage. She still would have been in proper company with her husband and the senators. When Empress Theodora travelled to the springs of Pythia, near Nicomedia, she is said to have been accompanied by patricians, servants and a retinue in the thousands.[1421] It was not only imperial women who had escorts, however. A story from early-9th-century Constantinople tells of how a rich widow took her afflicted eldest daughter to see the holy man Symeon: she took "attendant servants and maids with her, as was her custom."[1422]

Other evidence points to the practice among women of distinction of keeping each other company, providing mutual moral security by venturing into public space together or as a party. The *Life of St. Matrona* tells of two noble sisters, one of whom, Athanasia, at least is young, rich and

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[1415] Cf. Talbot 1997, 120-1, 130, 134, Talbot 1994, 105-6, 122, Herrin 1984, 183.

[1416] See occasional references to baths and the discussion in Chapters IV.D, 162-4, VI.A, 208. Cf. the report on Theophano, the future wife of Leo VI (AD 886-912), who was considered a praiseworthy young girl and who visited the baths, although in proper circumstances, Talbot 1997, 121, and Kazhdan 1998, 2-3.

[1417] Corippus, *In laudem* IV:53f. See Chapter VI.A, 206 n. 1296.

[1418] Cf. Herin 1984, 168-9.

[1419] Agathias, *Hist.*, V:3:7. See Introduction, 3.

[1420] Corippus, *In laudem*, I:189. See Chapter V.A, 178 n. 1116.

[1421] Theophanes, *Chron*. 186.8-13 (AD 532/3) [6025]. Malalas, *Chron*. 18.25. Cf. the mosaic in Ravenna depicting Theodora with her closest entourage (Fig. 7b).

[1422] *Life of Sts. David, Symeon, and George of Lesbos*, 195 (translated by D. Domingo-Forasté).

married, who go to a saint's feast together after which they become cognizant of Matrona and visit her.[1423] Two women of senatorial rank travel together from Ephesus with their children and a large escort of servants to visit St. Theodore.[1424] The illustration of Potiphar's wife in the *Wiener Genesis* also depicts her with a female attendant by her side when she receives men to hear her accusation of Joseph for attempted seduction (Fig. 1b).[1425]

Married women of any rank, if not with other women, are often described being in the company of their husbands, which was appropriate for a wife moving outside the domestic sphere. Other close male relatives might also serve as a respectable escort. The *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon* tells of men from the villages coming to the saint with their afflicted wives, and there is one tale about a married couple attending the festivities together.[1426] Other stories mention women without any specific comments about their company, in some of these cases they might be widows.[1427] One, at least, is married when she appears, seemingly alone, before Theodore and is cured of an evil spirit, but the evil spirit explains any improper conduct on her part.[1428] Two stories tell of women brought by some helpful individuals or an attendant to be cured.[1429] Such stories relate to ecclesiastic space and most refer to low or middle-class women.

Secular literature also gives examples of wives appearing in public with their husbands. In one poem, probably from the *Kyklos* of Agathias, a hopeful lover approaches a women named Melite even though she is in the company of her husband.[1430] Artistic equivalents in the *Wiener Genesis* also depict wives with their husbands.[1431] Although, women depicted alone occur as well, as in the picture of a women speaking to the jailer outside the prison in which Joseph is held (Fig. 2b).[1432] A mosaic border from Antioch with contemporary street scenes depicts a group comprising a man and two women standing on the street, talking (Fig. 8 a).[1433] They are standing next to "the workshop of

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[1423] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapters 38-40. See Chapter III.A, 106.

[1424] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 110. See Chapter III.B, 120. Cf. also Empress Sophia going to a church to pray with her adult daughter Arabia, in Corippus, *In laudem*, II:70-83. See Chapters III.A, 104, V.B, 188.

[1425] *Cod. Theol. graec*. 31, fol. 16 v. See also, Chapter VI.A, 208.

[1426] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon,* chapters 35 & 60 (afflicted women being brought by their husbands), 93 (the daughter of a deacon and her husband are childless and are presented together before the saint), 103 (a cleric and his wife, both afflicted, come to be healed), 112 (a boy having an accident after the annual feast is rescued by both his parents, who afterwards present him to the holy man for healing).

[1427] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon,* chapter 26, a village woman with an adult son comes for help, she may be a widow. Chapter 65 tells of a woman bringing a boy to be cured, and chapter 96 of a woman who, having suffered from an illness for 10 years presses through the throng to seek the holy man's blessing and cure.

[1428] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon,* chapter71: a woman rushes into the church and abuses Theodore verbally before the evil spirit is cast out. It is revealed later in the story that when her husband and child died she took up the life of a religious solitary, which shows that she had a husband when the incident occurred.

[1429] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 68 (a paralysed woman brought on horseback to the monastery), and chapter 85 (a paralysed woman is brought by her attendants).

[1430] *Anth. Gr.*, V:242 (by Eratosthenes Scholasticus, 6th century). Part of the poem is quoted above, see Chapter VI.A, 204.

[1431] *Cod. Theol. graec*. 31, fol. 8 v., Jacob with Rebecca among the inhabitants of Gera, & fol. 23 r, Jacob blessing Joseph's sons as his wife stands next to him.

[1432] *Cod. Theol. graec*. 31, fol. 17 r.

[1433] The topographical border of the Mosaic of *Megalopsychia*, dated ca. 450 AD, Levi 1947, I, 330, 626, and II, plate LXXIX a., and Kondoleon 2000, 8, Fig. 6, 114-5, 148, Fig. 2.

the Martyrion" ("*ta ergastheria tou Marturiou*"), and also close to the athletic arena ("*to olumpiakon*") shown in the background to their right and the baths next to it. The man and the woman on the left appear to be a couple, whereas the second woman conversing with them stands alone. The woman on the left is dressed like a *matrona*, and the other woman could be a servant or a merchant, judging from the object in her hand. Women depicted without specific reference to the company of a husband could in many of the cases be widows or women of lower status, for whom rules of propriety differed. The presence of other women also maintained expected propriety.

Unmarried daughters had their own set of rules. The ideal was to keep maidens in the house.[1434] Younger girls, it seems, could play in areas outside the house. Unfortunately, there is little information on this, and most of it is in religious texts referring to children's games in negative circumstances. Theodoret of Cyrrhus, writing in the 5th century, tells that little girls dressed up as monks and a demon, playing a game of make-believe in the vicinity of a spring, were punished by a holy man.[1435] In the *Life of Symeon the Fool* there is an episode with girls singing satirical chants and dancing in the street. When set upon by the holy fool the young girls are stricken and become cross-eyed. Some allow the monk to kiss their eyes and are cured, others refuse, possibly because of modesty, and remain afflicted. The holy man then states that these girls, thanks to their ailment, would escape the fate otherwise intended for them of becoming the most debauched women in Syria.[1436] The moral of the story concerns the singing and dancing, not the girls' presence on the street.

Ideals of propriety required families of some distinction to keep their daughters reaching a certain age, supposedly around 12 when by law they became marriageable, better protected. Accordingly, Philaretos the Merciful proclaims to messengers in search of bridal candidates for the Emperor: "even though we are poor, our daughters have never left their chambers."[1437] Theodore of Stoudios commends his mother for her protection of her daughter from contact with men.[1438] Euphemia's daughter remained in the inner chambers of the house, weaving wool as an earning, while her widowed mother went out doing her charity work and catered for refugee monks in other parts of the house.[1439] These texts all have a religious connotation. Other sources indicate that daughters did visit public space occasionally, usually accompanied by parents or a chaperone.[1440] There is one poem about a girl in the company of her mother giving away two apples to a man.[1441] Others mention older female servants or nurses as chaperones:

The old hag /---/ has a savage heart,

[1434] E.g. *Anth. Gr.* V:297 (by Agathias), and the discussion in Chapter II.A, 61-2.

[1435] Drijvers 1981, 29, on Theodoret of Cyrrhus' story on Jacob of Nisibis (4th c.)

[1436] Leontios, *St. Symeon* ch. 26 (Festugière 1974, 147) (written in the 7th c.). Talbot 1997, 121.

[1437] *Life of St. Philaretos*, 4.c. (Rydén 2002, 89). The maidens are his granddaughters. See also, Chapter II.A, 61-2.

[1438] Theod. Stoud., *Laudatio*, § 4. (Written ca. 797 - 802). Cf. Talbot 1997, 120.

[1439] John of Ephesus, *Lives*, chapter 12, (6th century) (Brock & Harvey, 1987, 128-9). See Chapter II.A, 61.

[1440] Cf. Talbot 1997, 120-121, also on Theophano, the future wife of Leo VI (AD 886-912), who was chaperoned by servants while outside the home, such as on visits to the baths. Kazhdan 1998, 2-3.

[1441] *Anth. Gr.* V:290 (by Paulos Silentiarios, 6th century). Quoted in Chapter VI.A, 203.

and will not be softened either by gold or by greater and stronger cups,
but is watching all round the girl.
If she ever sees her eyes wandering to me furtively,
she actually dares to slap the tender darling's face
and make her cry piteously./—/[1442]

and:

Alack, alack! Envy forbids even thy sweet speech
and the secret language of thy eye.
I am in dread of the eye of thy old nurse,
who stands close to thee
like the many-eyed herdsman of the Argive maiden. /---/[1443]

Such poems show how daughters were chaperoned, but they also hint that the seclusion of young unmarried women was not as comprehensive as ideals would have us believe. Outside the wealthier classes, daughters assisted their mothers with domestic chores and could, it seems, be sent on errands. Both Kazhdan and Talbot recall an episode in the *Life of St. Nikon* in which a girl is sent by her mother to fetch water from the well.[1444] This was a common task, a necessity of everyday life, which would not endanger a girl's reputation. The manuscript illustration of Rebecca at the well (Fig. 5) and the Biblical story it refers to gives an example of this.[1445] Young girls were also sent on errands in the vicinity, as in the story of a woman named Anna who sends a neighbour's twelve-year-old daughter to light a lamp in front of an icon in a church when she could not do it herself.[1446] Again, the ecclesiastic context helps to make it appropriate, but the girl still left her home and had to walk along some streets to get there.

There were no moral restrictions on sending female servants outside the house. Running errands was probably a common task for them, especially as the lady of the house may well be more restricted in her movements for reasons of status and social prudence. A poem from a slightly earlier period mentions nurses being sent to the boys' teacher with payment for their education.[1447] Constantina's servant Petronia functioned as a go-between delivering messages to individuals involved in the imperial power struggle: the court official Germanos, who was under suspicion for conspiracy, was unable to leave his house and wanted to be in contact with Constantina, the wife of the dethroned Emperor Maurice (582-602).[1448]

[1442] *Anth. Gr.* V:289 (by Agathis Scholasticus, 6th century) (translated by W.R. Patton, 1948-60).
[1443] *Anth. Gr.* V:262 (by Paulos Silentiarios, 6th century) (translated by W.R. Patton, 1948-60). The many-eyed herdsman is Argus, set to keep watch over Io.
[1444] Kazhdan 1998, 16, Talbot 1997, 120. BHG 1366, ed. D. Sullivan, *The Life of Saint Nikon* (Brookline, Mass., 1987), 98, par. 27.1-4.
[1445] *Cod. Theol. graec*. 31, fol. 7 r & v. Cf. also Theodoret of Cyrrhus's story about girls at a spring (above), Drijvers 1981, 29.
[1446] *Mir. St. Art.*, no. 34. See Chapter III, 100.
[1447] *Anth. Gr.* IX:174 (by Palladas of Alexandria, 3rd / 4th centuries)
[1448] Theophanes, *Chron.* 6099 [AD 606/7].

The presence of some women on the streets is also evidenced in a story from John Malalas' *Chronicle*. Writing about the year 529 he mentions, among other things, a travelling showman from Italy performing on the streets of Antioch with his dog. Both men and women are among the crowds watching the street performances, because Malalas describes one of the dog's tricks as picking out different kinds of individuals from the crowd and one type it could identify was pregnant women.[1449] Women could therefore join men in the crowds watching the performance. The brief account does not indicate social rank or possible company, or reasons why women might be among the crowd, but neither does the author give any indication that such female presence was unusual. There is a story in *Pratum Spirituale* about an old man doing charitable work for people travelling on the road between the river Jordan and Jerusalem, distributing water to those who are thirsty and helping to carry heavy loads. He also carried tools with him so that he could repair the shoes of both men and women passing by.[1450] It was not considered out of the ordinary to encounter individuals of both genders in public space. The above-mentioned floor mosaic from Antioch, depicting two women with a man in a street scene, is an artistic equivalent (Fig. 8 a).[1451] In addition, a carved wooden lintel found in Old Cairo, usually dated by its inscription to 734/5, includes a woman in the row of people cheering in the scene depicting the Entry into Jerusalem.[1452]

Women going on errands in the city was nothing irregular. There is a story in the *Life of St. Stephen* that is connected to his imprisonment in the Praetorium in Constantinople on account of his Iconophile views. The wife of one of the jailers was secretly a devotee of icons, keeping three of them in a chest, hidden from her husband. She managed to smuggle them to the prisoner she visited on Saturdays and Sundays, bringing him small amounts of bread and water.[1453] Such a story could not have been told had it not been considered normal for a wife to visit the jail in which her husband was a guard. It was not all that unusual for women to visit prisons, as the above-mentioned stories of wives providing food for their imprisoned husbands show.[1454] Theodoros of Stoudios recalls that his mother secretly visited him and his companions in prison to tend to their wounds, the political aspects of their imprisonment giving reason for the secrecy.[1455] The illustration in *Wiener Genesis* of Joseph in prison could also be mentioned, depicting a woman standing talking with the guard outside (Fig. 2 b).[1456] Women visiting husbands or family members (either in prison or at their place of work) was not extraordinary, it was within the limits of the accepted and the expected.

There was a range of places, therefore, that women could visit within the bounds of what was considered decent behaviour. All ecclesiastic surroundings, except the most restricted areas of

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[1449] Malalas, *Chron*. 18.51 [454]. Although Malalas does not have the best reputation as an historian today, he did have good knowledge of events in contemporary Antioch, where he wrote his chronicle.
[1450] Moschos, *Prat. Spir.*, Chapter 24.
[1451] Topographical border of the Mosaic of *Megalopsychia*, Levi 1947, I, 330, 626, and II, plate LXXIX a, and Kondoleon 2000, 8, Fig. 6, 114-5, 148, Fig. 2.
[1452] The *al-Mo'allaqa lintle*, Török 2005, 351-8, figs. 168-72, Brubaker & Haldon 2011, 113, fig. 6.
[1453] *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, 57 [p. 256-7] (Migne, *PG* 100:1085C-D, col. 1164A). Cf. Herrin 1983, 71, Kazhdan & Talbot 1991/1992, 395. See also Chapter III, 103.
[1454] Moschos, *Prat.Spir.* chs. 186 and 189. See Chapter IV.D, 169.
[1455] Theod. Stud., *Laudatio,* § 9.
[1456] *Cod. Theol. graec*. 31, fol. 17 r. See also above, 228.

male monasteries, were appropriate.[1457] Women could be seen in the streets, in proper company, of course, depending on their social and civic status. They visited other women, went to the well, took care of everyday tasks, went to the baths and even visited prisons. Women of lesser means took care of errands themselves, and some women even peddled merchandise. There were women present in taverns and inns, although respectable women were supposed to keep out of them. The Hippodrome was not a place for ordinary women, but women were seen there, and the Empress was present on special occasions, albeit among the court in the imperial box. Agathias, in turn, wrote a rustic poem about a woman named Rhodanthe visiting the site where men were treading the vine.[1458] Women were present in much of public space, albeit to a lesser extent than the male population, and circumstances such as social status and company influenced which categories of women were present and where. Therefore it is important that in the discussion of the female population the whole range of society should be included.

Various social occasions and gatherings brought women, even those of high rank, out of the family house. Among the opportunities for recreation and getting out of the house available to women Talbot mentions public baths, churches, shrines, processions and weddings.[1459] Given the vital role of the Church in society, religious events accounted for many of these occasions: many activities apart from church services were connected with the religious sphere, including processions, feast days, funerals, charity work and so on. The secular side of society likewise had social gatherings, whereas the execution of everyday tasks took women out of the house. All these gave men the opportunity to gaze at women of interest, situations to which some poems in Agathias' *Kyklos* might refer.[1460]

Justinian divorce legislation includes hints of the kind of situation that could occur and what was considered inappropriate with regard to female movability in public, at least for married women. The law lists legitimate reasons for divorce on the husband's part. Apart from clear cases of adultery, these include the wife's seeking the company of other men, spending the night away from home without reason, and going to the circus, the theatre or the spectacles in the arena without her husband's consent.[1461] Note that attending public performances is not rejected *per se*, it just should not take place without the husband's agreement. Procopius notes that most women did not go to public exhibitions.[1462] The ideal was that prudent women should avoid public spectacles, and they probably did for the most part, but even women of a certain status could attend, either with their husbands or in other acceptable company. As Choricius of Gaza mentions in his 6th-century *apologia* on behalf of (male) mimes, "married couples, virgins, the noble and rich, one's daughter and wife

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[1457] Secular law & church canon had strict regulations governing access by the opposite sex to monastic areas, e.g. *Nov.* 133 (AD 539), *Ecloga Bas.* 4.1.20, *Trullo*, 47 (691/2), The Second Council of Nicaea (787), canon 18. Cf. Talbot 1998, 114, and Herrin 1992, 102.

[1458] *Anth. Greac*. XI:64 (by Agathias Scholasticus, 6th century). See Chapter VI.A, 203.

[1459] Talbot 1997, 132.

[1460] E.g. *Anth. Gr*. V:267 (by Agathias Scholasticus), see VI.A, 204. *Anth. Gr*. V:290 (by Paulos Silentiarios), see Chapter VI.A, 202. *Anth. Gr*. V:289 (by Agathis Scholasticus), *Anth. Gr.* V:262 (by Paulos Silentiarios), see Chapter VII.A, 228. *Anth. Gr.* V:218, 237, 285 (by Agathias Scholasticus), about a girl or woman named Rhodanthe.

[1461] *Just.*, 5.17.8 (3). Beaucamp 1990, 174.

[1462] Cf. Procopius, *Bell.* 1.24.6.

were all seen" at the performances.[1463]

Another reason for divorce was if the wife had had the impudence to visit the baths with men.[1464] As discussed above, many baths either had double baths with separate wings for women and men, or single baths with different times allotted to male and female bathers, thereby providing the means for women to bathe in a respectable way. However, there must have existed some opportunities for women and men to bathe together, otherwise the provision of the law would have been superfluous, but presumably the women involved would usually have been less reputable. Conversely, canon law forbade clerics and ascetics from washing themselves in public baths together with women.[1465]

Laws referring to marital obedience regarding certain types of appearance in public affirm both the female presence in public space and the need to regulate it to comply with the ideological framework, especially given that some previous laws were repeated and specified in a *Novella* from the year 542. This law added a further reason for divorce: if, contrary to her husband's wishes, a wife attended a banquet with male strangers or stayed away from his house except to visit her proper parents.[1466] Again it should be noted that venturing out of the home and attending banquets *per se* were not improper or unacceptable: it was only if it was against the wish of the husband and without his consent that such conduct could have moral and legal consequences. The ways in which a wife participated in activities in public space therefore depended on the husband and, in practice, on the relationship between the spouses. It should be pointed out, however, that these are normative texts, giving the legal grounds for divorce. It does not mean that husbands always were concerned with the strictest letter of the law or wished to prevent their wives from attending social occasions outside the family home.[1467] The source material under discussion shows that married women were present in public space, and it also confirms that in many cases they were in the company of their husbands or other appropriate persons.

Women of the higher classes relied on women of the lower classes or servants for everyday matters, which made it possible for them to keep to the house. Various religious events, visits to churches and shrines, as well as social occasions and visits to the baths still took them outside all the while being appropriately accompanied. Married women had to take into account the wishes of their husbands and to be mindful of their moral conduct, and unmarried girls were kept under a watchful eye. The balance of respectability was maintained not only through proper company and by keeping within acceptable public space, but also through clothing, such as wearing concealing

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[1463] Magoulias 1971, 251 (citing *Apologia Mimorum*, Choricii Gazaei Opera, ed. R. Foerster & E. Richsteig, Leipzig 1929, p. 355 (51)).

[1464] *Just*. 5.17.11 (2). Beaucamp 1990, 174.

[1465] *Trullo*, 77 (691/2). Cf. Leontios, *St. Symeon*, chapter 14, which tells of a holy man who, encouraged to go and wash himself, went to the women's bath instead of the male one, which was further away, to demonstrate how detached from bodily physicality he was.

[1466] *Nov.* 117, c. 8 (4), (5) and (6). Beaucamp 1990, 176

[1467] Cf. the father demanding the disinheritance of his daughter who fell pregnant by a slave, although strictest legally permitted penalty was capital punishment, *P. Cair. Masp.* I 67097v D (dated between 567-570). Beaucamp 1992, 79-81. See Chapter VI.A, 211.

garments and a veil or otherwise covering the hair.[1468] Venturing outside the home might also be restricted to times when the streets were less frequented or there was less gazing eyes and less chance of attracting unwanted attention. The future wife of Leo VI (886-912), Theophano, although accompanied by her servants, is said to have considered it prudent not to go to the baths until dusk so as to reduce the chances of being looked upon by strangers.[1469] The allocation of separate space or time to women (as with the public baths, the differentiated display of the Holy Lance and the separate space in church) often facilitated female participation with the expected amount of decorum.

In exceptional circumstances women might venture into male-dominated space considered somewhat improper, or engage in actions deemed to go beyond coded female public behaviour. Troubled times and feelings of distress were potentially acceptable reasons for women to flout expected patterns. Acting in a good cause also excused behaviour that otherwise might have been deemed improper or outrageous.

Seeking justice or at least retaliation in a distressed situation is described as driving a widow who, having lost her son in unjust harassment and disputes with powerful neighbours, falls down before Emperor Heraklios outside the palace gates and pleads for his help.[1470] Concern for their loved ones is described as a reason why women put modesty aside and appeared before Emperor Justin II in the Hippodrome to plea for their imprisoned husbands and sons.[1471] Family misfortune also took the wives of destitute merchants to prison to provide for their jailed husbands.[1472] Anxiety about the safety of the city and rage about rumoured treason were said to have made some women in Thessaloniki lynch a distinguished leader of the Slavonic tribes.[1473]

Disaster and war took women out of the security of the home. Earthquakes forced everybody outside out of fear and people of all ranks gathered in streets and squares.[1474] Finding temporary relief after a long siege when provisions had become scarce, the men, women and children of Thessaloniki walked en masse out of the city to loot abandoned enemy villages.[1475]

Not only did political and religious fervour stir up the male population, according to some sources, they also brought women out onto the streets, occasionally even perpetrating violence in contradiction of ideological views of the female nature and female behaviour. The alleged participation of women in some of the initial and violent actions at the beginning of the Iconoclastic

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[1468] Cf. e.g. Messis 2006, 316-7, 395, discussing the symbolic value of the veil, its actual use or not, and the ideology that women should cover their hair for decency's sake. See the discussion on dress and self-representation Chapter VI.B, 215-20.

[1469] Talbot 1997, 120-1, Kazhdan 1998, 2-3.

[1470] Nikephoros, *Brev. 4*, see Chapter V.C, 199.

[1471] Corippus, *In laudem*, II:407-420, see V.C, 199.

[1472] *Prat. Spir.*, chs.186, 189, see Chapter IV.D, 169.

[1473] *Mir. St. Dem.*, II.1 [193] (Lemerle 1979, 174, 179). See the discussion in Chapter V.C, 201.

[1474] Agathias, *Hist.*, V.3.7. See Chapter I, 3. Cf. Talbot 1997, 129-30, and a similar comment by historian Michael Attaleiates on an earthquake striking Constantinople in 1068: "women forgot their innate modesty and ran into the streets". Kazhdan 1998, 2-3, 7 (has 1064). Here no distinction is made between women of breeding and other women, as Agathias does.

[1475] *Mir. St. Dem.*, II.4 [279-280]. See Chapter IV.D, 168-9. Cf. Talbot 1997, 130. Kazhdan 1998, 3.

period is discussed in Chapter III.[1476] Rare and exceptional, violent actions were undoubtedly dreaded by the authorities, but were acclaimed by authors if they thought the cause justified it.

One-off festive occasions and religious events were at the other end of the scale. The coronation of a new emperor was a rare occasion and the corresponding celebrations attracted people out of curiosity, not least about the temporary wooden structure erected in the centre of the capital for ceremonies connected to Justin II's accession to the throne.[1477] The fervour over religious miracles and rare relics gave women the opportunity to participate more freely and to mingle in the crowd.[1478] Whether joyous or distressing, exceptional circumstances stretched the social limitations on female behaviour and exceptional situations could turn codes of behaviour on their head, causing alterations in female movability in public space. In catastrophes such as earthquakes it concerned all women in that the imminent danger applied to everyone, whereas one might assume that aristocratic women were not involved in obtaining provisions after a siege, even if such a situation might take many women out of the home who otherwise would generally keep to the domestic sphere and limit their mingling in public. Phrases such as 'people of all age and gender' or 'men, women and children of the city' are *topoi* used to emphasise a marvel or an extraordinary event that drew large crowds, but they also reveal that at least parts of the female population were present. Women could still maintain the expected propriety through keeping appropriate company such as male relatives, servants or other women, and an appropriate *habitus* in terms of clothing and demeanour.

B. Women travelling

Voyages beyond customary dwellings constitute a special case. As Beaucamp notes, based on papyri from Egypt in the 4th to the 6th centuries, in ordinary families, the men of the house were more likely to travel for different reasons whereas the women only rarely absented themselves from home.[1479] On occasion, however, women did have reason to travel beyond their accustomed environment, either on longer journeys or to stay more permanently. These women were especially vulnerable, not only in the moral sense that their reputation more easily was at stake, but also in the physical sense facing dangers like potential seducers, violators or criminals.[1480] Away from her familiar environment a woman was not judged within a broader social context, she was a stranger judged by her *habitus* and possible credentials, which increased the need for decorum. Nevertheless, women did travel, from the countryside to urban centres and between cities.

[1476] On the Chalke gate incident in Constantinople, see Chapter III, 101-3. Cf. Talbot 1997, 129-30, and Kazhdan 1998, 2, on riots in the mid-11th century and a rebellion that overthrew Emperor Michael V.

[1477] Corippus, *In laudem*, IV:47-54, see VI.A, 206 n. 1296, VII.A, 226.

[1478] See e.g. *The Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 12 on relics of John the Baptist, the above discussion, Chapter III.A, 106-7.

[1479] Beaucamp 1993, 188, 191. Cf. Moschos' story about a merchant in Alexandria who leaves his wife and young daughter at home with a servant while travelling on business to Constantinople, Moschos, *Prat. Spir*., chapter 75. See Chapter II.A, 58 n. 283, 60.

[1480] Cf. Connor 2004, 5. Hanawalt 1998, 21-2, notes on the mediaeval West, the real physical risk for women travelling alone of being violated and raped.

As in other situations, women most commonly travelled in the company of their husbands or other family members. They might follow their husbands on their travels or when they moved for career reasons. Martina, the second wife of Emperor Heraklios, followed her husband on his military campaigns,[1481] and according to Procopius, Antonina, the wife of general Belisarius, accompanied him all around the world and joined him on his campaign in the West.[1482] Sources do not reveal much about the wives of officers and other military persons but there probably were women that followed the army in one capacity or another. One major reason for travelling was pilgrimage. *Pratum Spirituale* has a tale about a scribe leaving by ship from Constantinople on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, accompanied by his wife and entourage.[1483] Some funeral poems imply that wives had travelled or moved with their husbands from their customary habitat. Agathias, for example, writes in an epitaph, probably for his mother:

> /—/
> B. /—/ I see thy end was wretched, and who art thou?"
> A. "Periclea" B. "Whose wife?"
> A. "The wife of a noble man, an orator from Asia, by name Memnosius."
> B. "And how is it that thou liest by the Bosporus?"
> A. "Ask Fate who gave me a tomb in a strange land far from my own country./—/ [1484]

This and other texts by Agathias imply that his family followed the father when he was pursuing a career in the imperial capital.[1485] Another epitaph tells of a wife who may have been in Constantinople for similar reasons, and who died while away from home:

> Yea, I pray thee, traveller, tell my dear husband,
> when thou seest my country Thessaly,
> 'Thy wife is dead and rests in her tomb,
> alas, near the shore of Bosporus.
> But build me at home a cenotaph near thee,
> so that thou mayest be reminded of her who was once thy spouse.'[1486]

Leontius Scholasticus also writes about a spouse who left her native country for the capital:

> The tomb is Rhode's. She was a Tyrian woman,

[1481] Nikephoros, *Brev*. 11, 12, 20, *Chron. Pasch*. AD 624 [p. 714], *Theophanes* AM 6105 [AD 612/13]. Garland 1999, 62-3, Haldon 1990, 51. Cf. Kazhdan 1998, 6, on the 12th-century story of the young widow Eudokia, niece of Emperor Manuel I, who followed her lover Andronikos Komnenos to his military camp in Pelagonia.
[1482] E.g. Procopius, *Anecd.* 2.1, 3.1.
[1483] Moschos, *Prat. Spir*., chapter 174, see Chapter III.B, 119. Cf. Talbot 2002, 73-80.
[1484] *Anth. Greac.* VII:552 (by Agathias Scholasticus, 6th century) (translated by W.R. Patton, 1948-60).
[1485] Cameron 1970, 2, 4-5.
[1486] *Anth. Greac.* VII:569 (by Agathias Scholasticus, 6th century) (translated by W.R. Patton, 1948-60).

> and quitting her country came to this city for the sake of her children.
> She adorned the bed of Gemellus of eternal memory,
> who formerly was a professor of law in this city.
> She died in old age, but should have lived for thousands of years:
> we never feel we have enough of the good.[1487]

These women travelled for family reasons, to live either temporarily or more permanently in the capital of the Empire, but there was also movement in other directions. One funeral epitaph in Athens, possibly from the 6th century, is for a woman who was originally from Alexandria, and another, with uncertain provenience in Attica dating from somewhere between the 4th and the 6th centuries, is for Macrobius of Byzantium (*ergo* Constantinople) and his wife Paschasia.[1488] When persons of high rank or men in administrative or intellectual professions travelled or moved for career reasons, their family often accompanied them. Similarly, a man's family might follow him in exile, as in the case of a man named Theodore, who was exiled to Sicily with his wife and children during the Iconoclast Controversy.[1489]

Whereas administrators pursuing their career and merchants setting up trade in another city might be accompanied by their families, sources indicate that men travelling on business tended to leave their families at home. Among the papyri Beaucamp studied are letters that men on their travels sent home to their wives or mothers with instructions on how to manage things while they were away.[1490] There is also the story mentioned above about a merchant from Alexandria travelling to Constantinople, leaving his wife and six-year-old daughter at home with a servant.[1491] Another story tells of a merchant losing everything while at sea on business, eventually having nothing left except his clothes and a wife at home.[1492]

Although many women stayed behind, and there were more male than female travellers, ordinary women occasionally had reasons for travelling. They made shorter trips with husbands or family from the countryside or smaller towns to bigger city centres for business reasons, selling goods on the market, or for religious purposes. The story about an old man sitting by the road leading

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[1487] *Anth. Greac.* VII:575 (by Leontius Scholasticus, 6th century) (translated by W.R. Patton, 1948-60). The poem is vague: she could have been a concubine rather than a legal wife. She seems to be widowed and was apparently appreciated in academic circles in the capital, at least among students of Gemellus, and Leontius might have been one of his former students.

[1488] Sironen 1997, 204, no. 150, and 321, no. 313.

[1489] *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, chapter 74. Cf. Nikephoros, *Brev.* 45, on how leading citizens were sent as prisoners to the capital together with their wives and children, at the time when people in the Cherson and Bosporos areas were punished by Justinian II for having denounced him.

[1490] Beaucamp 1993, 188-91, discusses over thirty letters from the 4th to the 6th centuries exchanged between an absent husband or son and a wife or mother at home. Many of them refer to financial transactions or similar that the woman has to take care of while the man is away.

[1491] Moschos, *Prat. Spirit*., chapter 75. See Chapter II.A, 58, 60. Cf. Beaucamp 1993, 189, noting that the greetings sent in some letters indicate that only women and children remained at home.

[1492] Moschos, *Prat. Spirit*., chapter 189. See Chapter IV.D, 169. Cf. Moschos, *Prat. Spirit*., chapter 188, on two brothers, money lenders from Syria and living in Constantinople, the younger, who is married, travelling between the two places.

up from the River Jordan to Jerusalem who helped the needy and repaired the shoes of travellers indicates that among them were both men and women.[1493] St. Stephen's parents travelled together to present their son to the spiritual tutelage of the hermit John at Mt. Auxentos, some distance from Constantinople.[1494] One story tells of the perils that could befall both men and women travelling along a country road. Families from a village near Nikopolis travelled to Jerusalem for the baptismal of their children during Easter. As they were heading back home the company was attacked by robbers. The dreary story relates how the men fled while the bandits cast the newly baptised children from their mothers' arms and raped the women.[1495] Not even the company of husbands and travelling in a crowd guaranteed safety in such cases.

Given the risks of the road, women travelling without the company of close relatives could seek to join some other group. Women of rank were escorted by servants and guards to ensure both their personal safety and moral integrity. Among early tales of female saints are several about women dressing as men, usually monks. As Connor notes, there was probably also a practical side to such cross-dressing, in that travelling in the guise of a man could provide a degree of safety to some women otherwise travelling unprotected.[1496] Many of the women known from the sources that travelled with neither a husband nor close male relatives were on pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Although in theory all women could go on pilgrimages, most of the preserved stories concern women of the higher classes. *Pratum Spirituale* tells of the wife of a senator arriving in the Holy Land to worship at the holy places. No accompanying persons are mentioned, but one might assume that at least servants were included in the escort of such a high-ranking woman. She eventually decided to live a secluded life in Caesarea, and asked the local bishop for a church virgin as a companion, who would also function as her teacher and guide in her religious life.[1497] John of Ephesus tells of how the then old church virgin Maria travelled from southeaster Turkey to pray at Golgotha, stayed there for three years and then returned each year, once with her widowed sister Euphemia and her niece, both exiled from Amida. Another story tells of the holy woman Susan, who even as a child wanted to make a pilgrimage: beyond her hometown in the area northeast of Amida she came upon a large caravan of men and women on their way to Jerusalem, which she joined.[1498] As Talbot notes, most tales of longer pilgrimages by women relate to the early centuries. Palestine after the the Arab conquest was probably considered too perilous and female pilgrimage thereafter concentrated on shrines closer to home or in other parts of the Empire.[1499] Although cross-border travelling might have been limited, there is evidence that women continued to make pilgrimages to holy places within the conquered areas. A papyrus from Nessana contains a letter from the provincial governor to the local people directing them to assist his wife Ubayya upon her

[1493] Moschos, *Prat. Spirit*., chapter 24. See Chapter VII.A, 230.
[1494] *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, chapter 12.
[1495] Moschos, *Prat. Spirit*., chapter 165.
[1496] Connor 2004, 8.
[1497] Moschos, *Prat. Spirit*., chapter 206. See Chapter III.B, 123, III.D, 142.
[1498] John of Ephesus, *Lives*, chapters 12 & 27 (6th century) (Brock & Harvey, 1987, 124-5, 132, 134).
[1499] Talbot 1997, 133.

arrival, and to provide her with a man to guide her on the road to Mt. Sinai.[1500] The *Life of Stephen the Sabaite*, written by Leontios of Damascus shortly after 807, tells of two women from Damascus making regular pilgrimages to Jerusalem and Mt. Sinai towards the end of the 8th century.[1501]

Among accounts of women travelling on their own, the *Life of Mary of Egypt* tells of the voyage of the future holy woman from Alexandria to Jerusalem. She travelled alone, although not as a pilgrim, giving her sexual services to young men on board a ship containing pilgrims. Her "free roaming" travels and curiosity took her to Jerusalem, where she repented of her former sins and spent the rest of her life in solitude in the desert.[1502] *Pratum Spirituale* has a story about another Mary who was more ill-fated: she was a young widow, also from Alexandria, who tried to escape by ship to Constantinople after having taken the lives of her young children in an attempt to get a neighbouring man to marry her.[1503] Although the story is strongly moralistic, and providence punishes Mary, no moral dismay is expressed about her being alone, as it seems, on board a ship sailing to the capital. Other stories confirm that women travelled as passengers, either in company or by themselves, between cities.[1504] Some poems imply that women might travel around the Empire to seek their fortune. A poem by Paulos Silentiarios tells of a famous female lyre player, who probably performed in the capital but originated from Alexandria.[1505] Procopius, in turn, claims that Empress Theodora, a courtesan in her youth, travelled to Alexandria and in the Middle East before returning to Constantinople and meeting Justinian.[1506] Although these travelling women did not have the best reputations, a rather spiteful poem from an earlier century shows that migrating women were neither unheard of nor new. It is about a woman travelling around half the Empire in a fruitless search for an influential man to marry her:

> Though you leave Alexandria for Antioch,
> and after Syria land in Italy,
> no man in power will ever wed you.
> The fact is you always are fancying that someone will,
> and therefore skip from city to city.[1507]

The *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon* tells of the saint's mother making preparations to travel with him to Constantinople when he was a boy of six to put him in the service of the Emperor.[1508] Theodore

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[1500] Kraemer 1958, 207-8, papyrus 73, dated Dec. 683 (?). Brubaker & Haldon 2001, 58, and Brubaker & Haldon 2011, 322.
[1501] Published in *Acta Sanctorum*, Jul. III, 557 col. 133, Brubaker & Haldon 2001, 58, and Brubaker & Haldon 2011, 322.
[1502] *Life of St. Mary of Egypt*, *passim*, the section on her voyage in chapters 19-21.
[1503] Moschos, *Prat. Spirit*., chapter 76.
[1504] E.g. Moschos, *Prat. Spir*., chapter 174: a ship crossing from Constantinople to Palestine runs out of fresh water, and "women and children and infants perished from thirst".
[1505] *Anth. Gr.* XVI:278 (by Paulos Silentiarios, 6th century). See Chapter IV.B, 155, 157.
[1506] Procopius, *Anecd.* 9.27-28
[1507] *Anth. Gr.* XI:306 (by Palladas of Alexandria, 3rd / 4th century) (translated. by W.R. Patton, 1948-60).
[1508] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 5. See Chapter VI.B, 223.

of Stoudios, in turn, recalls that when he and his brother were imprisoned and exiled their pious mother Theoktiste made the cumbersome journey from Constantinople to meet up with them in secret. Not finding anyone willing to accompany her because of the precarious situation of a political imprisonment, not even among the male servants, she travelled alone. She secretly tended to her sons in prison and eventually in disguise (Theodore does not give details) met them at an inn on their journey to exile in Thessaloniki. They conversed there until dawn, then she went back to the capital.[1509]

The story of Matrona describes her travels in the Near East in an attempt to escape her husband and to follow an ascetic way of life. She originally left Perge in the company of her husband, who had certain prestige, bound for Constantinople. Later she was sent by ship from the monastery in which she had sought refuge to another one in Emesa. When her husband found her in Emesa she left the convent and set off alone for Jerusalem. Still trying to escape her husband, she sought out travelling companions to go to Mt. Sinai, but again had to change her plans and went to Beirut instead. The story confirms the practice among pilgrims of seeking travelling company and forming groups for the journey.[1510] Matrona considered settling down somewhere in the Near East (in Emesa, Alexandria, Antioch or Jerusalem, or on Mt. Sinai), but eventually decided to return to Constantinople. She travelled by ship in the company of two pious women from Beirut on their way to the capital to visit their grown-up children. Back in Constantinople she sent for her young female disciples, who were put in the care of a sea captain and taken from Beirut to her new convent in the capital.[1511] Matrona's story exemplifies how women could travel, as pilgrims seeking company in groups going in the same direction, finding safe travelling company and safety in numbers, or in the care of a male person who took responsibility for their safe passage. Other hagiographies confirm that women sought each other's company for travel purposes. The *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon* mentions two women of senatorial rank from Ephesus who travelled together to bring their ill children to Theodore's monastery at Sykeon. They were carried in litters and were followed by a large group of servants.[1512] The *Life of St. Matrona* also tells of the two noble sisters visiting together a religious festival at the church of St. Lawrence in Constantinople.[1513] In the *Life of St. Stephen the Younger* is told how even when the Emperor's men come to fetch the accused nun Anna, the abbess sends a fellow sister from the convent of Theophano to keep her company, although when Anna is put in jail she is sent back to the monastery at Mt. Auxentios.[1514] These stories all reveal how women for the most part, although not always, travelled in accordance with expectations.

[1509] Theod. Stud., *Laudatio,* §§ 8-11.

[1510] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapters 2, 4, 11, 13, 14.

[1511] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapters 24, 26, 28, 30.

[1512] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 110 (late-6th- early-7th century).

[1513] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 38. See Chapter III.D, 140.

[1514] *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, chapters 34-5 (relating to the mid-8th century). Cf. *Trullo*, 46 (691/2), which states that nuns should not go outside the convent except in case of absolute necessity, and only with the permission of the abbess, accompanied by an elder nun, and should not stay overnight. Cf. Herrin 1992, 102, Talbot 1987, 235.

C. Gender segregation and partial equality within the boundaries of decency

Scholars tend to focus on the degree to which women were confined to the home, and many consider it a general feature of Byzantine reality as far as females were concerned.[1515] What should be discussed is whether demands for segregation always implied less opportunities for women to be active in society. The focus in this section is on the interaction between the ideas of gender segregation and the possibilities society provided for women to be involved in various aspects of life and be present in public space. A balance between the ideological demand for gender separation and the practicalities of society, of which women, after all, were part, was achieved by different means.

One could supplement traditional explanations of female confinement away from the gaze of society in Byzantine ideology with the concurrent notion that a thing hidden is more honoured or valuable. Corippus puts this into words when he describes preparations for festivities in relation to Justin II's accession to the throne. "They stretched out curtains as befitted each place. They covered them over so that they might marvel the more. That which is common is worthless: what is hidden stands out in honour. And the more a thing is hidden, the more valuable it is considered."[1516] These notions connect with the ideal of keeping daughters out of sight before marriage, which safeguarded their vulnerable honour and kept their esteem high. It probably also had the more prosaic purpose of protecting their value on the marriage market. Philaretos' pronouncements about his granddaughters' secluded lifestyle when imperial envoys demanded to see the girls point to concerns about female honour. On the other hand, the indignation expressed by an innkeeper in the story of St. Mary / Marinos on learning that his unmarried daughter had become pregnant is indicative of a more harsh, calculating reality, as the father sees his prospects of security in old age, supposedly by getting her well married, ruined.[1517]

There has been a discussion among scholars on the degree of seclusion of Byzantine women. Talbot claims that they usually withdrew to their chambers if male guests were received in the house, but she does not indicate on what sources her assumptions are based.[1518]It is in line with the notion of a division between public/male and domestic/female, but the evidence does not always fully harmonise with the ideological position.[1519] A story in the *Life of St. Theodore* tells how the holy man, having cured the son of an elder in a village, is invited by the parents to supper.[1520] Although the text does not give details about the mother's partaking in the supper, she does play an active role in the story, sending another elder to fetch her husband when the son has fallen critically ill and

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[1515] E.g. Herrin 1983, 68, 71-74, Talbot 1997, 129-30, Talbot 1994, 105, 122. See the discussion in Chapter II.A, 60-62.

[1516] Corippus, *In laudem*, IV:83ff.

[1517] *Life of St. Philaretos*, 4.c. [455-9] (Rydén 2002, 89). *Life of St. Mary / Marinos*, chapters 9-10.

[1518] Talbot 1997, 132. Similar practices are followed in some Muslim communities, but without source references to such practice in Byzantine society it stays on the level of a general assumption.

[1519] Cf. Beaucamp 1992, 289-91, who notes that much of the evidence from the papyri does not fully harmonise with general ideology, as women took all kinds of economic initiatives, made contracts and even defended their interests in the tribunal.

[1520] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 72, (late-6th- early-7th centuries).

issuing the invitation with her husband. Even the *Life of St. Philaretos* tells that his wife was called in to greet the imperial envoys after they had dined, even if the other women of the family kept to their chambers.[1521] The stories refer to slightly different eras and areas, which might give cause for some variation in the practices. On higher levels of society, these stories compare with the presence of the Empress at official banquets and her receiving visitors with the Emperor, and with the wives of dignitaries meeting an ecclesiastical guest brought on a visit by their husbands.[1522] Another indication of women's presence at meals is the reference in one of Agathias' poems to a man falling in love with a woman he met at a place he went to dine.[1523] The man wanted a secret affair and to avoid marriage, but the objection was not that the woman was promiscuous nor were there other reasons related to her behaviour, it was purely practical and financial.[1524] A poem, of course, represents a fictional situation, but it should still have some plausible basis in contemporary social situations. Female presence in situations of dining therefore could not, *per se,* have been imprudent in the right circumstances.

There were ways of navigating between the private and the public by means of compromise and through 'gateways' that women could use to take part in society while maintaining the necessary gender-related prudence. I referred to funeral processions earlier.[1525] Many women seemed to watch such events from their doorways, windows and balconies, keeping to the borderlines between private and public. The *Trier Ivory* shows that women were not the only spectators to take advantage of the good view adjacent buildings could provide (Fig. 8b).[1526] The law allowed a *matrona* to give evidence related to her case in her own home, bringing matters that were usually dealt with in public into the private sphere of the house. This gave her the opportunity to participate in a lawsuit while not requiring her to enter the very male sphere of a courtroom.[1527] Women could still appear in court in person. Legislation in the 9th century took a stricter stance on female presence in court, prohibiting women from giving testimony except in special circumstances, when male witnesses could not be present precisely because of demanded gender segregation.[1528] These notions of the total exclusion of women from male-dominated space was not as explicit in earlier Byzantine centuries, however.

The home provided protection which enabled women to meet with visitors, as the visits Theodore made in Constantinople show. Moschos tells of a virgin inviting an infatuated man for the purpose of asking him about the reasons behind his passion, a snake-bitten monk obtaining a cure from a healer woman, and visiting hermits left alone with unmarried or widowed daughters of the

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[1521] *Life of St. Philaretos*, 4.b. [432-8] (Rydén 2002, 87). (late 8th century).

[1522] E.g. *In laud*. III:85ff., *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapters 82, 89-90, 140.

[1523] *Anth. Greac.* V:267 (by Agathias Scholasticus, 6th century). The poem is quoted in Chapter VI.A, 204.

[1524] It was probably not unusual for men with prospects but without sufficient assets of their own to seek a wife with wealth. Cf. Athanasia, who was wealthy but married a squanderer without enough assets of his own, *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, Chapter 42, see Chapter III.C, 126-7, IV.D, 166. Cf. also Messis 2006, 503, 509.

[1525] The funeral processions of Empress Eudokia (Nikephoros, *Brev.* 3) and Emperor Justinian (Corippus, *In laudem*, III:36ff.) are discussed in Chapters II.A, 63, III.A, 117.

[1526] E.g. Delbrueck 1929, 262-6, Cameron 1976, 181, Spain 1977, 281, 287 & fig. 1, Volbach 1976, 95-6, No. 143 and Taf. 76, and Wilson 1984, 609. See the brief discussions in Chapters III.A 117-8, V.B, 195, VI.A, 206 n. 1292.

[1527] *Just* 2.58[59].2 (1), *Nov*.124. Cf. Beaucamp 1990, 137. See Chapter II.E, 93.

[1528] Geanakoplos 1984, 304. See Chapter II.B, 93.

house.[1529] The company of attendants or chaperones shielded highborn women and young maidens when going outside.[1530]

One path for action, despite demands to keep the genders separated, was to form female networks or to enlist the help of male domestics. The demands made on female virtue supported the creation of networks on which women could rely for information or activities. Examples of this abound in the story of Matrona.[1531] In its simplest form it could be connections between neighbours. In *Pratum Spirituale* a monk relates how, when he still lived in the secular world, his former wife went to her neighbour to receive communion in her house.[1532] In another story a woman tries unsuccessfully to have a well dug in the vicinity of Apamea: she had a vision of a wonder-working icon, which she sent some men to fetch for her to bring water into the well.[1533] Female relatives functioned as chaperones or contacts, as in the story of Emperor Maurice's niece, who stayed with her aunt Damiane during her year of pilgrimage in Jerusalem, and is introduced by the aunt to the holy places.[1534] Convents had important functions also as safety nets ensuring female welfare, and networks of female vendors and workers attended to the needs of women in middle- and upper-class households. Women of the lower classes functioned as middlemen, or rather middle-women, for those with a higher social status, to whom stricter codes of separation applied. Servants ran errands in public space, whereas vendors and midwives brought the business or the care to the doorstep or into the house. In this way gender segregation also created opportunities for some women to work in female-related trades.[1535]

One option was not to venture outside in broad daylight at the busiest time in the middle of the day, but to go at dusk or after dark.[1536] Women on high levels of society had various means at their disposal to ensure segregation, even when attending public events and visiting public space. Attendants, servants or other company provided a social barrier between the woman and the crowd. Special seats or places were usually provided for both male and female persons of high rank at public celebrations, in this case focussing more on segregation between social classes than between the sexes. The requirements for gender segregation were on a sliding scale: the higher the social position in society, the stricter was the norm and probably also the practice of separating women from unwanted contact with outside men.[1537]

[1529] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter72, 89-90, 140. Moschus *Prat. spir.*, chapters 39, 60, 204, 205. Cf. Katzhdan 1989, 16-7, on chapter 60.

[1530] Cf. e.g. Croke 2005, 76-7. See the above discussion on the retinue of ladies and the chaperoning of unmarried maidens, Chapter VII.A, 226-9.

[1531] See e.g. Chapter VI.A, 206-7.

[1532] Moschos, *Prat. Spirit.* chapter 29. For details see Chapter III, 99.

[1533] Moschos, *Prat. Spirit.* chapter 81. Presumably the men sent on the errand were servants or others working for her, as she appears to have had some wealth.

[1534] Moschos, *Prat. Spirit.* chapter 127. See Chapter III.B, 123.

[1535] E.g. Herrin 1984, 169-70.

[1536] Cf. Talbot 1997, 121, on the future Empress Theophano (9th century) going to the baths under cover of darkness.

[1537] Cf. Talbot 1997, 129. Herrin 1984, 171-2 notes the relationship between social status and the stricter demand for gender segregation. She has a rather negative view on the possibility of circumventing these demands and venturing outside the domestic sphere without risking their reputation, a view with which I do not totally agree, based on the material used in this study.

One device used among the highest levels of society to help maintain separation between the sexes was to employ a member of the 'third sex', in other words eunuchs, as a go-between, a separating factor or an escort. Theophanes reports that an eunuch took Empress Constantina and her daughters to sanctuary after a political coup, and the *cubicularius*, who was also an eunuch, was sent to fetch Justinian II's wife and child when he was restored to power.[1538] There were eunuchs of high status in Byzantine society and some court offices were reserved only for them, but Herrin points out that they also functioned as reinforcers of sexual segregation and guardians of the domestic world of women.[1539] On the other hand, eunuchs could also be seen as facilitators, employed by high-class women in their own right.[1540] They could move between gendered spaces and be of service while ensuring the integrity of their mistresses. The dress code further served as a shield preserving female decency, chastity and honour, the veil being the attire most deeply steeped in symbolic value, but all types of clothing covering the body afforded protection, a 'private space' around the female body, keeping it out of sight.

A separate space, either spatial or temporal, was created for women on various occasions. To ensure segregation separate areas could be allocated, such as dividing church space according to gender.[1541] Taft discusses at length the separated areas in churches, at least in Constantinople, labelled "for women" ('*gynaeceum*'), as well as the upper galleries ('*chatecumena*') that women tended to use. The *gynaeceum* were usually situated in the north or the south aisle, or both, but as Taft concludes, these were not the only areas in which women stayed during the celebration of liturgy, and neither were they used exclusively by women.[1542] Nevertheless, there seems to have been a tendency to separate the genders during church services.[1543] The designation '*gynaeceum*' could derive from some early assigning of part of the church space for the use of women. In practice, however, women were probably inclined to congregate in one of the aisles and/or the balconies and the men in the nave, without there being a strict borderline for appointed or used space and without absolute and strict gender segregation: it was more a general tendency to have some sort of separation.[1544] Regarding later periods, it is known that men and women stood separately in church, men to the right and women to the left.[1545] Again, much of the behaviour of individuals probably

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[1538] Theophanes, *Chron.* I:293 (AD 605/6) & I:375 (AD 705/6). Ringrose 2003, 82.

[1539] Herrin 1984, 171. On Byzantine eunuchs in general, see Tougher 1997, *passim*, & Ringrose 2003, *passim*. Messis 2006, 867 - 1030, criticises the use of the concept 'a third sex or gender' as it does not occur in Byzantine texts, but is a modern category. According to Sidéris 2003, 222, 225-7, the four gender categories used at least in the earliest Byzantine period were males, male eunuchs, women and female eunuchs, the last-mentioned being women who had lost their female attributes and sexuality, often due to rigorous asceticism.

[1540] Cf. *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapters 5 & 43, Matrona, disguised as a eunuch, concocts a cover story about a former mistress, and Athanasia's eunuchs give witness to her attempts to live in the manner of an ascetic life.

[1541] Cf. Talbot 1997, 132-3.

[1542] Taft 1998, 49, 58-63, 86-7.

[1543] Chorikios of Gaza, *Laudatio Marciani*, II.47. [c. 536 - 548], Taft 1998, 57.

[1544] Cf. the comment on gender segregation in churches in Taft 1998, 63, 86-7. See also Chapters II.D, 81, III.A, 109-10.

[1545] Taft 1998, 57. Cf. Gertsel 1998, 98-105, who shows a correlation between iconographic depictions of female saints and the space used by women, usually the north aisle (or connected to it) in the late Byzantine period.

depended on class and social circumstances.[1546] With regard to Hagia Sophia, Procopius interestingly describes the two aisles on both side of the nave as exactly similar in appearance, except that one is for women, the other for men.[1547]

Aside from spatial separation, the sexes could be kept apart through time assignation. A good example of gender segregation according to society's demands is the display of the Holy Lance that was brought to the capital in 614. The holy relic was to be exhibited for veneration on two weekdays for the men in the city and on the following two days for the women.[1548] This meant that the need for separating the sexes was easily met, and it gave women an equal although protected opportunity to venerate the relic, without any concerns about having to mingle with male strangers. Similarly, public baths separated the sexes either spatially or by time, designating either separate bathing areas or different bathing hours to women.[1549] Gender segregation therefore did not automatically mean the confinement or exclusion of women. These examples also point to certain provisions for equal opportunity, at least with regard to some activities in society. On an abstract level they reflect ideas of the symmetrical presentation of the male and the female gender found in literature and art.

I mentioned a shift in ideology in connection with the development of the position of empress such that, at least on a symbolic level, she was considered a co-ruler in an entity recognised as the imperial couple.[1550] Ideas had evolved of at least partial recognition of equivalence between the genders, although it was limited to specific cases.[1551] There was also some acknowledgment of the capacity of women to fulfil functions adjacent to men and this gave them some cultural visibility.[1552] On the level of jurisprudence this was evident, for example, in the rising status of the mother and the expansion of her legal capacity in relation to her children.[1553] Also of note is a *Novella* issued in

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[1546] E.g. an early-14th-century text refers to noblewomen as congregating on the balconies of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, whereas other women seemed to be on the ground level (possibly in one of the aisles). See Taft 1998, 55-6, referring to Patriarch Athanasius I of Constantinople, letter 45, [c. 1309], in A.-M. Talbot (ed.), *The correspondence of Athanasius I, Patriarch of Constantinople*, CFHB 7 = DOT 3 (Washington, D.C., 1975), 94-95 (text), 353-54 (commentary).

[1547] Procopius, *Aedif.* 1.1.55-58. Cf. Paulos Silentiarios, *Ekphrasis* 550-89 (from ca. 563 AD), also describing the two aisles as similar except that the southern one had an area for the Emperor, separated by a wall [580-5]. The galleries are said to be reserved for women [586-9], Taft 1998, 34-6.

[1548] *Chron. Pasch.* AD 614 [p. 705]. Magoulias 1967, 251. Cf. Herrin 1984, 183, on the possibility for women of all social strata to participate in religious festivals and fairs, such as St. John's feast day in Ephesus and St. Demetrios' in Thessaloniki.

[1549] Cf. *Anth. Gr.* IX:620, 625, 783, and Leontios, *St. Symeon*, chapter 14.

[1550] See the discussion in Chapter V.A, 177-8, especially n. 1115, and 184.

[1551] Cf. Beaucamp 1990, 25-6, who notes trends towards equality between the sexes on two fronts, but only discusses it in connection with legal texts: some recognition of equality in the cult of God and recognition of the equal importance of women in the formation of the family. Messis 2006, 175, 223, 226 notes the deviation of the 6th-century medical writer Theophile the Protospatharian from the Aristotelian tradition according to which the woman is only a vessel for male sperm, insisting instead that both male and female 'sperm' were needed and mixed in the creation of a child, although male sperm is given higher 'creative' value [Theophilos the Protosparharian, *De corporis humani* 5.29.1-28 & 5.31 (ed. Greenhill)]. The only other Byzantine author with similar views seems to have been Psellos in the 11th century.

[1552] Cf. Kazhdan & Talbot 1991/1992, 403-4, referring to the growing social role of women in this period.

[1553] E.g. *Inst.* 3.3.4 and *Inst*. 4.8.7. Cf Beaucamp 1990, 327, 330-334, and Beaucamp 1992, 175-179. See the discussion in Chapter II.E, 88-9.

548 stipulating equal punishment for men and women in cases of unlawful divorce, the implication being that there should be equal punishment for equal crime.[1554] Certain aspects of spiritual thought also acknowledged some equal value between the sexes.[1555] Such ideas of equality despite gender are interesting. Among ideological notions positing that 'men are the head, and women the body' and that the public side of society was for men and the private sphere for women, occurred notions of equality in some form and signs of symmetry in the representation of men and women. These ideas appear on the highest levels of society and in philosophical and religious thought, and were also occasionally manifested in the different ways women were present in public space.

The best example of this in imperial art is the representation of the imperial couple, Justinian and Theodora, each with their entourage on separate but complementary, symmetrically posed mosaics in San Vitale in Ravenna.[1556] Barber offers an interesting gender analysis of these mosaics, suggesting that the position of the empress was in a transitory state, gaining a more official role. Although the two images, at a first glance, are seemingly analogous, Barber shows how the artist in making the picture of Theodora took special measures to emphasise, through the iconographic narrative, the power position of the Empress, which was not needed in the depiction of the Emperor whose status is obvious.[1557] He explains the reinforcement needed to present Theodora's status. Even so, her image parallels that of the Emperor and she is undeniably depicted in an equally prominent position Justinian, even to the extent, if one accepts Barber's interpretation, that the artist made an extra effort to convey such a message. According to Irina Andreescu-Treadgold and Warren Treadgold, however, some of Barber's conclusions are based on assumptions that do not take into account some later alterations to the original of Justinian's panel, which they uncovered in their close examination of the mosaics.[1558] Nevertheless, the mosaics indicate a period of ideological transition, in which traditional views prevailed at the same time as changes occurred to accommodate ideas of, if not full equality, at least a more inclusive symmetric representation and equality of opportunity.

Other examples of symmetrical representation include the rows of male and female saints in San Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna.[1559] Some tendencies to parallel male and female Biblical

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[1554] *Nov.* 127, c. 4. Beaucamp 1990, 225-6. Some laws introduced by Theodosius II already stipulate some equality between husbands and wives, but this is usually to secure the financial rights of common children (e.g. Beaucamp 1990, 230-2) and cannot be seen as advocating equality between the sexes if in similar positions.

[1555] See the discussion Chapter II.C, 75-7. Cf. Beaucamp 1992, 291-2.

[1556] Deichmann 1969, 155-6 mentions the written evidence of a 5th-century forerunner, indicating that Theodosius II with Eudokia and Arcadius with Eudoxia were depicted in the apsis of S. Giovanni Evangelista in Ravenna.

[1557] Barber 1990, 19-23, 33-40. Theodora is given extra height in relation to her followers, she is placed under a symbolic niche, and her dress is made extra sumptuous, with features adapted from the male imperial garment. The architectural background of the composition underlines a transition between private and public, whereas her placement between a group of male and female attendants points to her position between the male and the female spheres. Cf. Deichmann 1969, 241-3, and Deichamnn 1976, 183-4, 186, on how Justinian shares the picture with the bishop Maximian, who dedicated the church, while Theodora might have been his patron.

[1558] Andreescu-Treadgold & Treadgold 1997, 722.

[1559] Deichmann 1958, Abb. 98 -107, Deichmann 1969, 173, Deichmann 1974, 149-50, Deichmann 1989, 184-6. See Chapter III.A, 116-7 & Fig. 7 b.

personalities are already evident in the 5th-century mosaics in S. Maria Maggiore in Rome.[1560] There are further examples of the juxtaposition of males and females in religious art among the 6th- and 7th-century icons in St. Catherine's monastery in Sinai: St. Platon and an unknown female saint; the Annunciation with the Virgin and Gabriel and Saints Peter, Paul and Tecla; and pilasters with the Sacrifice of Isaac and the Sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter.[1561] When there were gender divisions, the north side of the church (in other words the left side, which might be considered the more meagre) was associated with women, at least symbolically, as in the mosaics of male and female martyrs in San Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna.[1562] Examples in the literature include Justinian's funeral procession with singing deacons and a choir of church virgins, described by Corippus.[1563] There are a few earlier examples of a male/female division at religious events. Gregory of Nyssa describes arrangements at Macrina's funeral: the crowd was organized into two parts, women joining the choir of virgins and men the group of monks, and they all sang psalms.[1564] John Chrysostom describes the transfer of relics arranged by Eudoxia, the wife of Emperor Arcadius: women of all ages followed the Empress out of the city on the first day, and the Emperor with his entourage had their procession the next day.[1565] Ideas of segregated gender symmetry are continued in the 10th-century *Book of Ceremonies*: it mentions 'the court of the women' and ceremonies led by the Empress and female members of the imperial family, which mirrored those for male courtiers, officials and individuals of rank.[1566]

In everyday life, symmetry and equal opportunity was evident in public baths, which provided services for both men and women, either in separate baths or in double baths with separated parts or different bathing times. The equal days of veneration of the Holy Lance are mentioned several times above, and Procopius describes the aisles alongside the nave in Hagia Sophia as exactly similar in appearance, except that one is for women and the other for men. Sixth-century sources repeatedly portray the equal but separated presence of males and females, and remnants of such symmetry are to be found even later. When the mid-9th-century *Vita Tarasii* praises the bishop's virtues and describes his iconographic programme in churches, the chapter on male martyrs is followed by one on female martyrs, albeit shorter and including children, and the protomartyrs Stephen and Thekla are mentioned together.[1567]

Double monasteries with separate sections for monks and nuns but directed by a single superior, existed before the 6th century but were, in principle, prohibited in Justinian legislation because of the risks to the reputations of the monastics as well as the temptations they might face.

[1560] Brenk 1975, 119, 181.

[1561] Icons B.15, B.19-20, B. 29-30, in Weitzmann 1976, 38-40,44, 52-5, Pls. 17, 61, 65-8, 78-81-

[1562] E.g. Deichmann 1958, Abb. 98-107. The mosaics on the north wall of St. Demetrios in Thessaloniki also have a strong female connotation, but this might be a coincidence. Cormack 1969, Plates 3-5, 7-9, and Brubaker 2004b, 72-8, 86, Fig. 3-5.

[1563] Corippus, *In laudem* III:36ff. See Chapter III.A, 116.

[1564] *Life of St. Macrina*, PG 66, col. 960-1000, esp. col. 993ff. and *La Vie de Ste. Macrine*, ed. Pierre Maraval, Source Chrétiennes, no. 178, Paris 1971, p. 246-52.

[1565] Chrys., *Homily II*, 467-72. Wilson 1984, 604, 608-9, 611.

[1566] Cameron 2006a, 82.

[1567] *Vita Tarasii*, §§ 50-51.

Nevertheless, they continued to exist well into the early 9th century, despite attempts to end the tradition. The canon 20 from the Second Council of Nikaia (787), for example, forbade the foundation of any new establishments of this type, and later, in around 810, the patriarch Nikephoros closed down all double monasteries. The *Life of St. Stephen the Younger* also mentions such arrangements at Mt Auxentios in the late 8th century, and the *Life of St. Anthousa of Mantineon* tells of a large double monastery in Paphlagonia constructed around 740, where Anthousa functioned as superior and which Constantine V and his wife Eudokia visited.[1568]

Ideas of symmetry and partial equality are also reflected in the ordination of deacons and deaconesses. Taft mentions the earliest extant rite for the *cheirotonia* of deaconesses in Byzantium, described in a mid-8th-century codex, which shows almost exact parallelism between rites in instituting deacons and deaconesses. Deaconesses were ordained in a similar way and in the same location as deacons, in other words in the *bema* and therefore within the sanctuary. A deaconess was thus allowed into the area inside the chancel barrier, which was off limits for the laity, men and women alike: the Emperor was the only exception. Deaconesses even received the chalice and drank from it during communion, although unlike deacons they returned it to the altar and were not allowed to minister to others.[1569]

Literary narration indicating the involvement of the masses tends to use the *topos* that persons of 'every sex and age' came running or were present, or alternatively 'men, with women and children'.[1570] Even if the genders were presented symmetrically or together one should note, however, that when they were hierarchically arranged, men outranked women in being placed first or by occupying the more prestigious space.

One significant point in many of the above-mentioned cases is that despite the equal opportunity and the gender symmetry, there were still degrees of segregation, not only on a physical level but also symbolically in art representations. The female saints and the male saints in Ravenna are on separate rows, and Empress Theodora with her followers occupy their own picture space opposite that of Emperor Justinian with his male suite. They are presented symmetrically in parallel positions, but they are kept separate, divided in terms of space, in the same way as the ideological aim was to keep individuals segregated by gender. I would like to characterise this as partial equality within the boundaries of decency. There was some kind of an idea of a segregated gender symmetry, incorporating notions of equal opportunity between males and females with regard to public space. A level of morality, as conceived by society, had to be maintained and was supported in normative texts as well as in other public presentations, both literary and pictorial. Nevertheless, ideology did

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[1568] *Just*. 3.43.1, (AD 529) [cf. Scott 2012a, 6], *Nov*. 123.36, (AD 546) repeated in *Ecloga Bas.* 4.14+5. Talbot 1985, 3-6, Talbot 1998, 118, Garland 2013, 32. *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, chapter 13, 18 (refers to the 8th century), Auzépy 1997, 10-7. *Life of St. Anthousa of Mantineon* (in the 10th century *Synax.CP*, 848-52), Talbot (ed.) 1998, 14, and Brubaker & Haldon 2011, 216-8.

[1569] Taft 1998, 63-64, referring to *Barberini gr.* 336, §§ 161-64. See Chapter III.A, 109. Cf. *Life of Matrona of Perge*, chapter 12: Matrona in a throng of people in a church, was trapped at the front with a relic and so by chance came to distribute the blessed oil to others together with the bishop and the priests. See Chapter III.A, 106.

[1570] E.g. Corippus, *In laudem* III:36f. & IV:53f., and *Mir. St. Dem.* II.4 [279-280]. Moschos, *Prat. Spir*., chapter 79, with the whole congregation, listing not only 'men and women' but many other opposites. See also the *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 43, 114-118, with stories of how large parts of some villages are affected by evil spirits. See the discussion in Chapter VI.A, 206-7.

support certain symmetry and occasional equality of treatment, while underlining the need for separation for the sake of protecting female virtue.

Theological views emphasised the importance of keeping the genders separate on an abstract level as well. Some hagiographies on women describe a sort of 'equality' achieved by female saints who surpass their 'natural' female feebleness by ascetic exercise and become almost like men. Saradi-Mendelovici points out, however, that this *topos* also underlined the feebleness of women, who could only become worthy of sanctity by overcoming their weak female nature.[1571] These texts therefore did not necessarily advance ideas on equality or gender symmetry. A popular topic in earlier hagiographies concerned women who actually disguised themselves as men so as to be able to lead a spiritual life.[1572] The Church was officially opposed to this type of presentation, which blended the sexes or eliminated the differences between them.[1573] Although these stories were popular and continued to circulate, this type of saint's lives are not known from later periods. There was a shift in the way models of female sanctity were presented, and in later texts female saints followed a more feminine path.[1574] This represents a deeper level of the notion of the importance of separation, namely gender identity unmixed, male as male and female as female. Some equal opportunity could be granted as long as women were kept separate from men and women kept to being women.

Despite the strength of traditional ideals of female confinement and segregation of the sexes, their application was never absolute in any part of society. There was a constant balance between the moral demand to separate persons of different gender and for women to keep to the family house, and the practical arrangement of activities in public space in which individuals of both sexes participated. Different methods, procedures, routines and behavioural patterns served to maintain this balance, thereby satisfying both practical needs and ideological demands.

There was also some inclination to provide equal, albeit separated, opportunities for participation, which is what could be defined in modern terms as partial equality in the treatment of men and women. This is not to say that the society was egalitarian in any modern sense. The ancient notion of male superiority was also strong in Early Byzantine society. Even so, there were tendencies in certain cases to equalise the treatment of men and women, as evidenced in certain legal developments, in some artistic output and in an array of practical attitudes and arrangements.

[1571] Saradi-Mendelovici 1991, 93-4, see also 90-1.
[1572] See also, Chapter II.B, 72-3.
[1573] Saradi-Mendelovici 1991, 91.
[1574] See the discussion in Chapter II.B, 73.

VIII Fulfilling or transgressing ideals

Ideas and ideals of women influenced normative texts and ideological attitudes, especially on higher levels of society in which much of the normative source material and definitions of ideology were created. Prevailing ideals of womanhood emphasised the type of conduct to be strived for. This framework of social ideas and norms worked on a more general level, as guidelines, and did not prevent the female side of the population from being active in society or having their share of public space. The system was flexible in that the specific ways in which the general rules of female behaviour were applied varied depending on the location, the type of situation and the persons involved. The varying practical realities demanded elasticity in the idealistic framework of social norms. The balance and established codes were also continuously being renegotiated and changed over time.

In their purest form, the ideals were almost unreachable for ordinary women, only saints and the Virgin Mary being able to live up to desired standards. On the other end of the spectrum was the burden of traditional views of the female nature, including notions of women's natural weakness. Pessimistic views and positive ideas both inherited from antiquity commingled in the philosophical blend of opinions in early Byzantine society. Women had to find a way to respond to the demands of daily life amid the pronounced ideas and ideals. The ideological framework that pervaded literary texts, imperial and religious propaganda, public and popular art and unwritten social codes must have affected women. Most of the responses to ordinary situations were probably attempts to follow normative behaviour as far as possible. Exceptional situations reveal how flexible the behavioural boundaries were. Deviation from ideal behaviour and assumed social norms was tested in such situations, showing the border between accepted levels of transgression and unexcepted behaviour that was rebuked and chastised.

Women were present in social and public space: that much is clear. There were also ideals requiring respectable women not to show themselves too much in public. It was necessary to find a balance between these aspects in terms of who could move outside the domestic sphere and under what conditions, and the ways in which mechanisms of social control operated varied, as did the consequences of flouting social norms or moral codes.

According to the sources, some public locations and social events were frequented by women of all ranks, whereas other occasions and locations were associated only with some categories of women. Space and occasion could be separated to cater for female participation, but social position also played a major part. There were wide differences among women in how diligently social codes were applied. Inherent in the distinction between acceptable and unacceptable female behaviour were complicated patterns and partly unconscious notions of cultural concepts. Different types of location and social setting were frequented by varied sections of the female population. The question of the segregation or presence of women in public space is therefore neither clear-cut nor simple and cannot be addressed through generalisation: it should be analysed with attention to fluctuation between various levels of ideas and practical applications depending on social and civic status.

Differences due to variation in social and topographical settings are examined in the following sections. Factors affecting both norms and practical behaviour are discussed. The

relationship between normative ideals and practical reality is examined through deviations due to various situations, and types of locality and individuals. Societal reactions to unacceptable transgressions of normative behaviour are also considered, in other words, the limits of accepted deviation and the consequences for women who did not conform to accepted social rules and norms. Chronological aspects are also addressed.

A. Gender, status, location and occasion as factors in behavioural considerations

In this first section I consider how the possibility to engage in activities in public space was affected by gender. This is not altogether simple in that the four factors under consideration (gender, status, location and occasion) are intertwined. Gender in itself was not necessarily an impediment. Although some public space (such as a lawcourt) was considered a strongly male domain due to its nature and it was advisable for women of virtue not to venture into it without good cause, in most cases women were not prohibited from entering any specific place. The only constraints were moral and social.

The only real exception was the closed-off area in male monasteries reserved for ascetics. On the other hand, this worked both ways: Justinian legislation had strict regulations forbidding a person of the opposite sex from entering a monastery. In the case of female convents, for practical reasons priests and grave diggers, for example, were exempted.[1575] Church canons concurred with a gradually increased degree of strictness. The council in *Trullo* (691/2) stipulated that men were forbidden to spend the night in a female convent, and women in a male monastery. The Second Council of Nicaea (787) ruled that women were not allowed to visit male monasteries under any circumstances.[1576] On the other hand, a mid-7th- century miracle text describes the Virgin Mary clearing the way for a sick female pilgrim to enter a male monastery, thereby making it allowed for female pilgrims to enter that monastery.[1577] *Vita Tarasii* also tells of ill women dressing as eunuchs to approach the bishop's grave for healing purposes, women not being allowed in the monastery and therefore not able to enter otherwise.[1578] On the other hand, many stories in the *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, discussed in earlier chapters, show that women could enter the church and outer precincts of a monastery for healing purposes and church services. Most women were also forbidden from entering the sanctuary and altar area of churches, but these areas were not accessible to most men of the laity either, whereas deaconesses and some women belonging to religious orders were allowed into this part of the church on certain occasions.[1579] Some public space, as has been discussed, could be reserved for the use of men and women on separate occasions, which at that time excluded the opposite sex.

[1575] *Nov.* 133 c. 1 (AD 539), *Ecloga Bas.* 4.1.20.

[1576] *Trullo*, 47. *Nicaea II*, canon 18, Talbot 1998, 114, and Herrin 1992, 102.

[1577] Krueger 2011, 33, citing *Miracula Beatae Virginis in Choziba*, *AnalBoll* 7 (1888), 360-70. See aAlso, Olster 1993, 319-20.

[1578] *Vita Tarasii*, §66. Cf. Haldon 2007, 277 on the importance of physical contact with the relics of saints.

[1579] *Trullo*, 69, forbids all lay persons from entering the altar area. Taft 1989, 63-4, 72-76. See also, Chapter III.A, 109.

Inherent in one's social rank were varying opportunities and expectations. Although Byzantine society allowed for certain social movement, making it possible for individuals to rise from one social class to another, it was hierarchical. This also affected men and their behaviour and access to places, even if the impact might have been slightly stronger on women.

Ladies of distinction, for example, were under social pressure to remain more confined,[1580] but on the other hand they had access to locations and occasions not attainable to ordinary women, and they even had official reason to be present. The Empress with her entourage accompanied the Emperor to official events in the *kathisma*, for instance, although the Hippodrome was not considered the most appropriate place for women on other occasions. After all, women of rank were not behind closed doors all the time and frequented public space, especially for religious purposes. In doing so they were usually accompanied by servants or equally elevated relatives or friends, which safeguarded their reputation in the eyes of society and differentiated them from the lower classes, thereby underlining their social dignity. It is true that the most rigorous expectations of segregation were projected on women at the highest level of society, but it should be borne in mind that women of high rank comprised a relatively small minority of all women, even though they are strongly represented in the source material.

Some occasions brought together, on some level, women of most categories. Several public locations such as baths and churches attracted individuals of different status to the same places at the same time. The above-mentioned provisions for the veneration of the Holy Lance only allowed for division according to gender. The source makes no mention of separate provisions for individuals of different social rank, only stating that the relic was displayed on separate days for the women of the city. When women of different rank were present simultaneously, distinction might have been made by means of placement, such as the different seating in the Hippodrome and the different positions in church. Separation was also created through attendants and the company the women kept. Further, displays of clothing and ornaments served to emphasise social distinction, triggering acquired behaviour that kept everyone in their proper place and thereby creating social distance. Accessories and general *habitus* have always been important markers of social status, and separators when individuals from different classes coexist in the same public space.

The importance of class has to be considered with regard to gender segregation and the effectiveness of its application. Commenting on the earthquake of 557, Agathias implies that it was not unusual to see women out in public, but it was to see women of dignity roaming in the streets among men.[1581] The appraisal is vague and might include what could be called 'honourable women of good family', often designated with the epithet *matronae*. As previously mentioned, legal provisions for giving testimony at home applied only to *matres familiarum*, in other words respectable women of some distinction and honour who usually were married.[1582] Women of lesser social status could not invoke this law clause and therefore were obliged to attend the law court in cases concerning them. The social ideal of a *matrona* also included the idea of being accompanied

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[1580] Cf. e.g. Agathias, *Hist.* V.3.7, *Just.* 6.57.5. Beaucamp 1990, 22, 307, 348, and Laiou 2001, 263-4 (10th-14th centuries).

[1581] Agathias, *Hist.* V.3.7 Cf. Talbot 1997, 129, Laiou 2001, 263-4, 266 (10th-14th centuries).

[1582] *Just* 2.58[59].2 (1), *Nov*. 124. Beaucamp 1990, 137. See Chapter II.E, 93.

by her husband, whereas women of the aristocracy and the richest strata of society are often described in the sources as attending public occasions in the company of their female peers and servants.

Although ideals for female behaviour by their nature were universal, in practice, women from the middle and lower classes were less restricted, even if the way dress codes were followed probably was similar. Duties related to the household took women to the well, the market place and the shops. The responsibility to provide for family members prompted them to run small businesses, and in unfortunate circumstances to visit prisons. These women ventured outside the family house for other reasons, as well, such as unusual events or to visit a pious individual. They may have been accompanied by a male family member or a servant, but they were evidently out there in the cities watching street performers or hoping to see new marvels.[1583] In many cases they ensured moral security in the company of each other, women travelling together and daughters with their mothers. As bath attendants, midwives and vendors some of these women had employment in public space, which helped to maintain the respectability of other women and their separation from male society.

Then there were women of lower social status such as servants, slaves, the poor and destitute, and the ill-famed. Their situation in life tended to prevent the strict application of common ideas of female behaviour: on the contrary, it sometimes demanded integration into the male population and visibility in public space. Society did not expect similar standards of virtue from servants and slaves, who were expected to take care of duties outside the domestic sphere on behalf of their masters and mistresses.[1584] The poor could not afford to conform to ideals of seclusion and separation: they had to find the means for sustenance and survival and to provide for their family, either by begging or finding employment of some kind.

Prostitutes frequented places in which it was not proper for the majority of women to be seen, such as taverns, inns and places of entertainment. They also appeared in public in more provocative clothing. Female performers and innkeepers clearly constituted distinctive categories, although they were sometimes associated with prostitutes. One reason for this was that the spaces these groups of women frequented were similar in some respects. On the other hand, these groups were not homogeneous. There were renowned female performers and there were cheap entertainers near the somewhat blurred borderlines with prostitution. Some gained wealth, which could provide them some respectability.[1585] This, in turn, probably affected how they chose to present themselves in public, seeking to emulate respected society.

Female performers, innkeepers and prostitutes might transgress customary social gender boundaries, but the price they paid was their reputation. At the other end of the scale were women who conformed with the ideals of female seclusion to a great extent. They included monastics and other women devoting themselves to a religious life, such as church widows and virgins, for whom expectations of gender segregation and seclusion were even more strict than for women of the nobility. Even these women were sometimes to be found in public places, although most of the

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[1583] Cf. Malalas, *Chron*. 18.51 [454], on pregnant women in the audience of a street-performance, Corippus, *In laudem*, IV:47-54, on a temporary amazing wooden structure.

[1584] E.g. *Anth. Gr.* IX:174, children's nurses sent to pay teachers.

[1585] See the discussion in Chapters IV.B & C.

events they attended were restricted to different types of ecclesiastic space. These women were the ones who were least expected to be seen in public, although special occasions brought them from their convents, homes and other places of retreat. The movability of nuns living in convents was heavily circumscribed and there were only a few authorised reasons for leaving the confined area, and then only in the company of one or several other nuns.[1586] Regular visits to hermits or religious shrines in the area were among the accepted reasons. Some convents were established in the proximity of male monasteries, in part to serve the purposes of female relatives of the monks, such as mothers, sisters and even former wives. As Talbot points out however, female convents tended to be in an urban setting, functioning as coenobitic monasteries, in contrast to many male monasteries of the *laura* type built in desolate and remote areas. This, on the other hand, fostered a closer relationship with urban public space and facilitated participation in female networks: lay women could visit the convent while the nuns remained in the enclosed area.

Factors other than rank and social status that affected the level of segregation or mobility in public space included age and civil status. There were slightly different behavioural models for young girls, unmarried maidens, wives and widows, and to some extent for young and old widows.

A stricter observation of seclusion for maidens until marriage was presumably relatively common, although this was intertwined with aspects of class. There was some discord between the ideal of total segregation and the practical reality. The age of the girl also made a difference. As a child she might play with other children of both genders outside the family house and even on the streets, but there was probably a shift when the young girl reached puberty and became of marriageable age: she was expected thereafter to keep to the house and to the company of women. Social pressure and models presented by the surrounding society were probably enough to enforce correct gendered behaviour.[1587]

The law allowed girls to be married after they reached the age of twelve. It seemed to be relatively common for daughters of good families to marry between the ages of 14 and 16, but in practice there was wide variation.[1588] An unmarried daughter's reputation and virginity had to be protected, and the best way of doing this in the eyes of society was by segregation and seclusion. Seclusion was not always applied to the full extent of the ideals, however. Daughters were sent on relatively safe household errands close to home, such as fetching water from a well. They could go to social events with their mother or other trusted persons, which gave the opportunity for contact with the opposite sex, at least by stealth.[1589]

Being a wife and a mother were expected roles for women and the majority stepped into them. Married women, therefore, constituted a large proportion of women in society. Rank, wealth and life circumstances then affected how they lived up to the ideal of mistress of the domestic domain.

[1586] E.g. *Trullo*, 46 (691/2). Cf. Herrin 1992, 102, Talbot 1987, 235. See Chapter VII.B, 240 & note 1514.

[1587] Cf. some present-day Middle East societies in which children may play together, whereas social pressure sets in and checks the behaviour of girls reaching sexual maturity, circumscribing their movements (e.g. the author's own observations during archaeological expeditions in Petra, Jordan, 1997-2001).

[1588] *Inst.* 1.22. See Chapter II.E, 87, in which evidence of the age of marriage is also discussed.

[1589] See e.g. Chapter VII.A, 228-30.

Given that women tended to marry young, and to men older than themselves, widowhood was common. Widows constituted a separate category, with slightly different norms and opportunities. Lacking a husband, they could not be accompanied by a spouse, but then there was less need for moral protection. They were no longer maidens having to be kept safe for a future husband, nor was there any risk that suspicion of their infidelity would inflict humiliation on a husband. Widows therefore experienced a larger degree of independence and liberty in many areas of life, compared to women of other civic status. Whereas a respectable woman was always supposed to be mindful of her reputation, widows were better able to move about in public without risk to their moral reputation. Again, differences in social rank guided appropriate conduct, regulating how an individual was accompanied in public. When position and wealth made it affordable a large escort might be an aspiration, which not only served a moral purpose but also signified dignity and status.[1590] The only company available to many widows, however, was that of family members or friends. The story about a widow appealing to Emperor Heraklios for justice outside the palace gates does not mention any accompanying persons, and no such remarks were essential anyhow in this case.[1591] In another story in *Pratum Spirituale* a widow praying at a shrine in Alexandria is said to be accompanied by what seem to be servant boys and girls.[1592] The difference between the two stories is probably also related to social-class, but the need for a proper escort was not as acute for widows. Age was a further consideration. A young widow, for instance, was not considered suitable as a deaconess, who had to be past the age of fertility and any obligations to care for her family to be accepted into the order. Presumably in other circumstances, too, the age and therefore the potential sexual attractiveness of a widow affected what company she kept and how she navigated the public sphere.[1593]

There clearly were differences in behavioural expectations and movability in public space among unmarried, married and widowed women. Age also mattered, and rank and wealth had an impact on social expectations and restrictions beyond those related solely to gender.

Turning thing the other way, there were notable differences in the categories of men from whom women had to be separated. Although the family home belonged to the domestic and private sphere, private houses occasionally opened their doors to strangers making not only social but also what could be called official visits. Stories of men entering the domestic sphere show that their social position affected the circumstances and what was considered acceptable. Talbot claims that well-bred women kept to their chambers when male guests came to dine, but some sources indicate that women did welcome and encounter male guests in their houses.[1594]

There are tales of monks being accommodated by ordinary people when taking care of business outside the monastery, where they would encounter women of the family. The monks in

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[1590] Cf. e.g. the tale of a rich widow in the *Life of Sts David, Symeon, and George of Lesbos*, 195. See Chapter VII.A, 227.
[1591] Nikephoros, *Brev. 4*. See Chapter V.C, 199, and Chapter VII.A, 233.
[1592] Moschos, *Prat. Spir*., chapter 224.
[1593] Cf. *Pratum Spirituale* chapter 236 (Mioni 5, BHG 1442m) on a young good-looking widow praying in a church in Constantinople that she would be afflicted so as to be delivered from sexual temptation and the desire to remarry.
[1594] Talbot 1997, 132.

these moral stories fall into temptation when finding themselves alone with these women, be it an unmarried daughter, a widowed daughter or a female healer, but are persuaded to resist by the virtuous women.[1595] The women prevail with their chaste behaviour and avert the precarious situation. The stories show that no discredit fell on a woman remaining alone with a guest from a religious order. Other stories tell of men inviting ascetics into their homes to bless or cure their wives. In these cases the wives were in the company of their husbands while in the presence of a stranger.[1596] The *Life of St. Theodore* likewise contains several examples of the holy man visiting a house and also meeting the wife.[1597] The social position of the male guest and the type of visit dictated how the women of the house received him and what amount of contact was proper. Members of ecclesiastic orders and ascetics were morally 'less dangerous' than others, and women could be in contact with them without too many restrictions. Dignitaries such as the emissaries of the Emperor visiting Philaretos' family could not be refused a meeting even with the daughters of the family, if requested for a specific purpose. Here, power position and importance counted.

The next determinants affecting women's presence in public, topography and events, should be considered together. Different localities had their own associations with regard to social codes and which individuals might be seen there, whereas the character of the event could affect participation in some locations.

The most common public spaces were streets and roads, channels for transporting commodities and for people moving between places. They functioned as informal places of gathering or places of commerce. Occasionally they staged official processions or constituted a location for popular entertainment, and in rare cases they even provided the setting for public uprising. On the day-to-day level social rank affected how women appeared and travelled on the streets in the city and on the roads outside. Female traders, professionals, servants and slaves had tasks that took them from one place to another. The proper and the most common way for married women to travel was in the company of their husbands or in a group of women, or then escorted by servants if the family fortune allowed it. However, their movement was more free in the local community, visiting neighbours or nearby shrines, for example.[1598] Wealth and dignity occasionally required a larger entourage, but quantity related more to status than to the safeguarding of moral dignity.[1599] Ladies of rank also used litters to be carried around, creating certain segregation and protection.[1600] Choosing the appropriate time of day to venture out was another way of providing a

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[1595] Moschos, *Prat. Spir.*, chapter 39, 204, 205. See also, Chapter VII.C, 242, and on the female healer IV.A, 151.

[1596] Cf. Moschos, *Prat. Spirit*. chapter 114: a childless couple invites a monk to give a blessing, but even if the husband was present malignant individuals spread a rumour implying that the husband was sterile and that the monk fathered the child.

[1597] E.g. *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon,* chapters 72, 89-90,140. See also Chapter III.B, 119-20, V.B, 192 n. 1221, VII.C, 241-2.

[1598] E.g. Moschos, *Prat.Spir*. chapter 29, on the wife of a Monophysite taking communion in a neighbour's house while her husband was away. See Chapters VII.C, 242, and III, 99.

[1599] E.g. *Life of St Matrona of Perge*, chapters 38-40, *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 110, *Prat. Spir.*, chapters 174, 127, *Life of Sts. David, Symeon, and George of Lesbos*, 195, Corippus, *In laudem*, I:189 See Chapter VII.A, 226-7.

[1600] E.g. *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 38, *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 110. See also Chapter VII.C, 239-40.

protective shield.[1601]

Special circumstances and events brought people, including women, onto the streets. Corippus, describing a temporary wooden structure that was erected for the festivities related to Justin II's accession to the throne, uses the phrase "every sex and age came running" to indicate how people in the city came to marvel over it.[1602] Malalas' account of an Italian street performer in Antioch indicates that women also stood around, watching and marvelling.[1603] Corippus uses expressions such as "every sex and age met for the exsequies" in his description of Justinian's funeral procession, although he does not specifically mention women being on the street. He does comment that women were watching from the windows and balconies of houses, the account of Empress Eudocia's funeral providing a parallel to this.[1604] If women were among the bystanders in the streets, most of them presumably belonged to the lower classes. Women did join religious processions, however: the choir of virgins mentioned by Corippus; Matrona with her spiritual sisters from the convent in a procession to transfer the relics of John the Baptist; village people, women included, in a religious procession arranged by Theodore for their cure; the entire population of a town, again including women, walking to a nearby shrine during its annual festivities.[1605] On the other hand, Corippus' account of the ubiquitous joyous festivities when Justin II ascended to the throne makes no mention of women, although it specifically refers to young men praising the imperial couple in merry singing and dancing on the streets.[1606]

The type of the occasion affected female participation: once again, events with a religious connotation were considered appropriate, whereas profane partying on the streets at night was not suitable for honourable women. Dramatic events such as riots, protests, war and natural catastrophes could turn accustomed female behaviour upside down, however.[1607] Personal distress gave a widow good reason to prostrate herself in front of the Emperor on the streets of Constantinople.[1608] Even in ordinary circumstances most categories of women were now and then to be found on the streets for one reason or another, which was acceptable as long as they traversed this space in accordance with their status and rank. The previously-mentioned mosaic from Antioch (Fig. 8a) shows that women were part of the street scene, at least in some ways.[1609]

Just as funerals and religious processions gave good reason for women to venture into in public space, most types of religious establishment were considered appropriate for women to visit. This gave at least some opportunities for social mingling, even if provisions were made to separate women from men as well as individuals of different social rank. Not all religious events were equal,

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[1601] E.g. Talbot 1997, 121, on Theophano only visiting the baths at dusk. See Chapter VII.A, 233.

[1602] Corippus, *In laudem* IV:53f. Cameron 1976,180 describes it as a literary cliché. See the discussion in Chapter VI.A, 206-7.

[1603] Malalas, *Chron*. 18.51 [454]. See Chapter VII.A, 230.

[1604] Corippus, *In laudem* III:36ff. Nikephoros, *Brev.* 3. See Chapters II.A, 63, III.A, 117, VII.C, 241.

[1605] Corippus, *In laudem* III:36ff. *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 12. *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapters 43, 71. See Chapter III.A, 106, 110-11, 113, 116-7.

[1606] Corippus, *In laudem* III:61ff.

[1607] See e.g. Chapter V.C, 200-202.

[1608] Nikephoros, *Brev.* 4. See Chapter V.C, 199.

[1609] Levi 1947, I, 330, 626, and II, pl. LXXIX a; Kondoleon 2000, 8, Fig. 6, 114-5, 148, Fig. 2. See VI.B, 223.

however. A well-organised occasion infused with imperial propaganda such as the public display of the Holy Lance in Constantinople in 614 was very different from an annual religious celebration, or some miraculous event with disorganised throngs of people mingling regardless of gender and rank. There was also continuous discussion about women attending nightly vigils. Although religious texts support the practice, they also give clues that it could arouse disdain among some individuals in secular society: hagiographies point to the husband of the woman keeping up such religious habits. Church widows attended nightly vigils and joined in the psalm singing at least, whereas the social norms with regard to married women were more ambivalent, depending to some extent on her age (young or old). Opposition was stronger earlier in the period, and the practice became more established later on: writing in the late 8th century, Theodore of Stoudios lists among his mother's virtues that she regularly attended midnight office.[1610] Social rank, on the other hand, does not seem to have played such a big role.

Visiting renowned holy men was not improper, although married women seemed to visit such persons with their husbands whereas widows might be on their own or in the company of some family members. Even in ecclesiastical establishments, the rule remained that well-bred unmarried maidens moved in public with a chaperone. The situation was slightly different for a church virgin, but her *habitus* signalled her status, which gave moral protection. The civil state of Emperor Maurice's niece, who visited her relative the lady Damiane in Jerusalem, is not known, but the older women functioned as guide, company and chaperone for the younger one on her visit to holy sites in the Holy Land, at the same time introducing her to the places and the people there.[1611]

The closed-off parts of male monasteries were not accessible to women. The habitations of hermits living out in the wild were more difficult to seal off from visitors and intruders, however. *Pratum Spirituale* tells of a female ascetic wandering around her hermitage in the Palestinian desert and happening to come upon the lodgings of a male ascetic in the same neighbourhood. Although this created a situation of temptation for the male hermit, no blame or shame is put on the woman. She was not at fault when moving around in the terrain.[1612] In this, as in other stories of female hermits, the virtuous nature and the religious character of their lives are warranties, even when they meet male strangers. When the holiness of the hermit was considered great and the visits were beneficial from a religious perspective, they were encouraged and permitted for nuns, albeit under regulated conditions.[1613]

Charitable institutions run by the religious establishment could provide lodging for poorer travellers, usually pilgrims, but they generally served as hospitals or were meant for poor and old people. The bishop established maternity wards in Alexandria.[1614] A 7th-century papyrus from Nessana mentions a monastery with "women's quarters" for female pilgrims or worshippers.[1615]

[1610] Theod. Stud., *Laudatio,* § 4. (Written around 797 - 802).

[1611] Moschos, *Prat.Spir*. chapter 127.

[1612] Moschos, *Prat.Spir.* ch. 19. See Chapter III.D, 141.

[1613] *Vita s. Auxwntii*, PG 114.1432-36, Janin, *Eglises Centres*, 45-47, referred to by Talbot 1985, 3.

[1614] Leontius of Neapolis, *Life of St. John the Almsgiver*, chapter A7 (Dawes & Banes 1948, 195-6). See alsoTalbot 1994, 116, and Talbot 1997, 125.

[1615] Kraemer 1958, 227-33, no. 79.

Otherwise the sources are sparse on how female travellers and pilgrims might have arranged accommodation and nourishment. There are references to caravans of men and women travelling together for pilgrimage.[1616] Public houses and similar facilities were not considered proper for virtuous women to frequent, at least not on their own, and there are few mentions of them in the sources. Theodore of Stoudios tells of his mother Theoktiste meeting him and his brother one wintery evening at a rustic inn on their way to exile in Thessaloniki. She was forced to travel alone, and due to the circumstances of their meeting she came in secret and in some sort of disguise.[1617] What the sources do indicate is that women usually travelled in company and not alone. The services of public establishments could be considered if they were travelling with male family members, another proper escort, an entourage or in the company of other respectable travellers. Another possibility was to rely on a network of contacts for lodging and other needs during the journey. It is implied in most stories mentioning women in inns that their virtue is at risk, and the same goes for women working in such places or running them. However, the negative associations are not absolute or definite.[1618]

Women from the middle and lower classes at least were seen in other places of commerce. Wives of craftsmen and merchants might help in the running of shops and workshops, and some women ran their own enterprises as producers or vendors. Wealthy women who owned businesses probably employed others to run them, thereby avoiding public exposure.[1619]

Explicitly male-dominated space such as locations and buildings used for the administration was seldom frequented by women of any category. Women were occasionally allowed in courthouses if their circumstances or the handling of their own affairs necessitated it. Provision could be made for respectable married women to avoid such appearances, however. It also seemed customary for husbands to intervene on behalf of their wives in court cases, even without a specific mandate, whereas women lacking a husband might personally attend the court or authorise a male relative with a mandate to act on their behalf. The ideal was for women to avoid the predominantly male space of the courts. Beaucamp's study indicates that wives and younger women in particular were well advised to avoid it, whereas widows were in a different position and social practice could be more lenient regarding them. However, she only considers the civil status of the women mentioned in the papyri, not the social status of those appearing in court alone or with representatives, be it their husband or someone else with a specific mandate.[1620] The law did not prohibit women from entering law courts or from being involved in cases related to themselves, it only provided the means for respectable women to avoid it. The preferred social practice among married women seems to have been for their husbands to intervene on their behalf. Objections to the appearance of women in court intensified only in the late 9th century.[1621]

[1616] E.g. John of Ephesus, *Lives*, chapter 27 (6th century) (Brock & Harvey, 1987, 134).

[1617] Theod. Stud., *Laudatio,* §§ 8-9.

[1618] E.g. *Life of St. Mary /Marinos*, chapter 9-10, 13: it is not the inn, but her pregnancy, that tarnishes the innkeeper's daughter. *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon,* chapter 25: a female innkeeper contracting a favourable marriage.

[1619] See the discussion in Chapter IV.A.

[1620] Beaucamp 1989, 132-4.

[1621] Geanakoplos 1984, 304. Cf. Beaucamp 1998, 134, 144. See Chapter II.E, 93.

There are stories of women visiting prisons, places with which they would be least associated according to social norms. Such tales are about wives of prisoners visiting their husbands, or the wife of a prison guard visiting a prisoner with whom she shares religious beliefs.[1622] The virtue of the prisoners' wives may have been at risk, but the stories do not linger on the fact that they were frequenting a place in which they inevitably came into contact with male strangers. The moral value lay in their conduct and the devotion shown to help their husbands. As far as women as prisoners were concerned, both the legal texts and other sources recommend that they be confined in convents or guarded by other women. One reason recurs: the hazard of being exposed to sexual abuse if women were confined in prisons with men.[1623] Reflecting cultural ideas, imperial women imprisoned for political reasons in the early 7th century were put in a monastery in Constantinople. Similarly, John of Ephesus relates how ladies of the nobility in the late 6th century who refused to accept the imperial definition of orthodoxy were confined in the particularly strict nunnery at Chalcedon,[1624] whereas women of lower rank who had similarly transgressed were put in normal prisons together with men.[1625] Papyri also show that, despite the ideals, ordinary women were put in public jails with men even after the law forbidding it was introduced in 556. Some, but not all, were imprisoned with male family members, but it is difficult to determine whether or not this was considered a moderating factor.[1626] Strict segregation between the sexes in such cases came to be a privilege reserved for women of rank. The *Life of St. Stephen the Younger* tells of the nun Anna who, falsely accused of licentious behaviour, is kept in prison before her punishment of violent beating is carried out. Afterwards she is sent to a convent where she lives out her life. Prison here is a short-term solution, the convent the long-term destination, but the aim of the story to emphasise the violence on the part of the authorities should also be kept in mind.[1627]

The last category of places to be considered concerns those reserved for recreation and entertainment. Obviously, much depended on the activities taking place in them. Bath houses, with traditions going back to antiquity, primarily had a utilitarian function and were universally acceptable. Women of most social groups could meet in public baths, which were open to all social categories and were frequented by housewives and maidens, as well as by women selling their sexual favours. Women of the highest social ranks may have been the only ones rarely seen, possibly having access to private bath houses. The bath house as a milieu might have been respectable enough, but the streets around it were more dubious, places where women might prostitute themselves in the evenings. This was, of course, connected to male bathing hours or baths reserved for men, which

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[1622] Moschos, *Prat. Spir*., chapter 186, 189. *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, chapter 57.

[1623] *Nov*. 134 c. 9 (AD 556) forbids the detention of women in prisons. In civic affairs or if the crime was mild only a guarantor was needed to ensure her appearance in court, or in grave cases it was recommended she be detained in a convent or kept guarded by women. Cf. Beaucamp 1990, 137, Beaucamp 1992, 74.

[1624] *Chron. Pasch*. AD 612 [p. 702], Gregory the Monk, *Chron*. 662-4, Theophanes, *Chron.* 6098, 6102 [AD 605/6, 609/10], Theophylact, *Hist*. VIII.15. John of Ephesus, *Eccl. Hist.* II.12. Herrin 1984, 182.

[1625] John of Ephesus, *Eccl. Hist*. I.10-11. Beaucamp 1992, 339.

[1626] *P. Oxy*. LVI 3869 (from the 6th or 7th century), *P. Cair. Masp*. I 67005 (AD 567), *P. Cair. Masp*. II 67202, l. 2-3, *PSI* VII 824, *Stud. Pal*. X 252, l. 1-2, *P. Grenf*. II 99a, l. 8-12, *PSI* I 52, l. 27-30, *SB* VI 9146, l. 14-15. Beaucamp 1992, 76-7, 339. See also Ruffini 2011, 31, 545. See e.g. Chapter II.D, 94.

[1627] *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, chapters 35-6. See also, Chapters II.E, 94 n. 543, III.D, 140.

was where prostitutes would find customers. On the other hand, dusk could also be a good time for a virtuous woman to visit the baths, being better cloaked in the streets by darkness than during the busy hours of full daylight.[1628]

Other forms of recreation were less suitable for women, and most females probably restricted their visits to places of entertainment, with the exception of female performers, of course, whose profession it was to enter such spaces. Indeed, this was one of the main reasons for their frequently dubious reputation and the fact that they had low status by law, occasionally with less legal protection than women of other social categories, and tended to be grouped with prostitutes and innkeepers. Despite such associations, female entertainers could gain fame for their artistry and there was diversity inside the profession. The art form and the type of performance, as well as the location, affected moral judgements. A female musician was relatively respectable compared to a female performer at the Hippodrome, for example.[1629] A poem on an image of the dancer Helladia in Constantinople indicates that dance performances at some festivities were relatively respectable, and that female spectators might have been present.[1630] Although normative texts tend to group female performers together, in practice they were not a homogeneous body and were judged individually, depending on their art and the places in which they performed. As far as prostitutes were concerned, spaces for entertainment might be where they found some of their customers.

The Hippodrome was a case with its own special features. Most large cities had such a stadium, but the one in Constantinople was the largest, the most famous and the one with the greatest importance. It also had a semi-official position on the political arena, as the place in which the Emperor met his subjects. Both the Empress in the company of other imperial ladies and courtiers and the Emperor with his court officials attended ceremonies at the Hippodrome, the Empress at the side of the Emperor in the imperial box, the *kathisma*. However, it was also a venue for games and performances that had a dubious reputation. Under the law, frequenting the Hippodrome without her husband's permission was due cause for a man to divorce his wife.[1631] Given permission and with suitable company, or with her husband, of course, a wife could go there, although Procopius claims that women tended not to go to public exhibitions of this kind.[1632] By way of comparison, however, the stadium and the theatre in Aphrodisias still had inscriptions reserving some seats for women in Late Antiquity. Such women were either highborn or were named with their husband or another woman, and were usually seated in the upper rows, such as those in Rome, so as not to have men look down towards them but the other way around.[1633]

A factor to consider was the type of occasion arranged in the Hippodrome, which was used both for regular horse races and official games and ceremonial events arranged by the court. Presumably the law refers to entertainment events. Orchestrated ceremonies appeared to give people

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[1628] See the examples and discussion in Chapters IV.D, 162-4, VI.A, 208, VII.A, 233.

[1629] Cf. e.g. *Anth. Gr.*, V:222, VII:597, 598, 612, XVI:219, 277, 278, 285, and Procopius, *Anecd*. 9.1-30. See Chapter IV.B, 155-6.

[1630] *Anth. Gr.* XVI:284 (by Leontius Scholasticus, 6th century). See Chapter IV.B, 154.

[1631] See Chapters V.A, 178, 181, V.C, 200 n. 1264, VII.A, 232.

[1632] Procopius, *Bell*. 1.24.6.

[1633] Roueché 1993, 120-1,

the opportunity to approach the Emperor with appeals. Corippus tells of how women came forward in the Hippodrome to appeal for their husbands and sons in front of the new Emperor Justin II, although he also notes that these women acted against normal female modesty by coming forward so publicly.[1634] The Hippodrome was therefore somewhat ambiguous in nature. Respectable women were not normally supposed to frequent the place, female performers performed there during games, whereas women of the highest rank could be present at official ceremonies, accommodated in reserved areas with a proper entourage.

A further aspect of locality related to geographical differentiation. Until the shrinking of its territories during the Arabic conquests from the mid-7th century onwards, the Byzantine Empire was a large entity incorporating many geographical regions each with its own cultural heritage and local customs. This also affected female behaviour, even though the basic assumptions and norms of the dominant culture were commonly followed. There were also differences in lifestyle in large cities, small towns and rural villages. Given the scarcity of the material such differences are difficult to chart, and any variation may be attributable to factors connected to the source type. Even so, some aspects are worth consideration.

Constantinople, the largest city and the capital, functioned as a magnet for both administration and commerce. It probably had not only the highest density of aristocratic women, but also the highest frequency of female performers and prostitutes. As an administrative centre it attracted capable men from the provinces, including their wives and families. It was therefore probably the most multi-cultural and multi-ethnic urban centre. Jerusalem compared in diversity, being the most important centre for pilgrimage. Women of all social categories were among Jerusalem's temporary inhabitants. Alexandria was also a multi-cultural centre by tradition, with strong intellectual, educational and scholarly connotations. It played an important part in Church politics and functioned in the 7th century as a centre for refugees, among them many women fleeing the turmoil of the conquest wars fought in the Palestinian provinces. Further north, Antioch and Ephesus were old cultural cities and administrative centres with their own cultural traditions, whereas Beirut was a major port and a centre for law studies. In the Balkans Thessaloniki was a commercial crossroads, probably with a rich mercantile class, until troubles with Avar and Slavonic intrusions in the 7th century occasionally put the city under siege. The ethnic mix of the population was also different in these cities situated at opposite ends of the Empire.[1635] All of this had some effect both on the composition of the female population in these urban centres and on how social norms mixed with local traditions and were applied in praxis.

Gender, personal social status, type of public location and type of occasion all have to be considered in any attempt to evaluate female presence in public space and how praxis related to normative codes of behaviour. Stricter restraint was usually reserved for certain social categories, but women of high social rank and unmarried maidens could, by the employment of different means of protection, and depending on the location and the occasion, visit public space. Well-bred women could move in public in well-orchestrated situations given an appropriate degree of protection to

[1634] Corippus, *In laudem*, II:407-420. See Chapter V.C, 200.
[1635] For an overview, see e.g. Haldon 1990, 92-124.

separate them from unwanted contact with strangers. In everyday life, the majority of women present in most public areas were of the lower social classes.

B. Social norms and everyday practicalities: negotiable boundaries

Some scholars have remarked on the occasional discrepancy between social norms and actual behaviour of some women in Byzantine society. Beaucamp points out that women transgressed ideals when they conducted financial transactions and appeared before the tribunal, for example.[1636] As Laiou notes, "the variance between ideology and reality in Byzantium was particularly evident with regard to the participation of women in economic activities such as agriculture, manufacturing and trade." Further, "for the most part, the sources present model views of female behaviour, and it is only indirectly that the face of reality may be uncovered."[1637] Beaucamp also observes that ideals and stipulations presented in the law code were not always practised in reality, such as in the cases of female imprisonment documented in some papyri.[1638] What is worth consideration is the extent to which ideas and ideals were put into practice and the degree to which moral boundaries of female behaviour were negotiable in terms of everyday practicalities. Factors such as status, location and occasion played their part. My focus in this sub-chapter is on how boundaries of social norms were negotiated in everyday life, and on the fulfilment or transgression of expectations. In situations where the border of the acceptable was transgressed, the attention is on how it was dealt with and how it affected the life of the woman in question.

To recapitulate, social norms and expectations of female behaviour encapsulated the following main aspects: the domestic sphere was considered the natural surrounding for women, whereas the public sphere was a male domain. What was, in general, the most important for a woman was to maintain her moral credibility and her reputation. Suspicion of sexual licentiousness was considered a serious matter. Women therefore were expected to limit their contact with male strangers, the implication being that they should also be cautious of how they were present in male-dominated public space, ideally keeping to the family house as much as possible.

The seclusion of women was more than an ideal. It was the reality to some extent, but with some modification. The ideal applied to some women more than others, and there was flexibility in adherence. Despite the cultural rhetoric of restricted female mobility, different groups of women engaged in a variety of activities outside private houses. When they ventured out in public space it was up to the individual to behave according to the demands of the situation if social repute was to be upheld. Different strategies were employed among women appearing in the public arena, and these moderating factors helped to achieve a balance between normative expectations and practical realities. Demands to conceal the sexually tempting female body and to maintain decorum were met through the wearing of appropriate clothing, including head scarves, veils, hair covering and body-covering vestments in general. Separation in terms of space or occasion helped to achieve a balance

[1636] Beaucamp 1992, 290.
[1637] Laiou 1982a, 243.
[1638] See Beaucamp 1992, 77, and above Chapter II.E, 94.

between the need for propriety and female participation. The company women kept in public, be it of a husband, a chaperone, a family member, servants or other attendants, or finding protection by joining a group of other women, signalled a level of morality and helped to preserve their social reputation. Conducting business through female networks (of vendors, servants or neighbours, for example) was another way of maintaining the required degrees of respectability and segregation. Thereby the gap was bridged between demands on female decorum and the practical realities of being present in public space in everyday life and on special occasions.

Special circumstances allowed for some temporary exemption from normal rules governing acceptable female behaviour. Even if an action was not considered appropriate for women, distress was an excuse such that it did not reflect as badly on the women involved as it might otherwise have done. Acceptable exceptions included emergencies and crises, concerning the whole society or restricted to the level of the family. Natural and manmade catastrophes such as earthquakes, famine, siege and other actions of war could temporarily throw normal rules overboard. When the family was in crisis the women joined in attempts tried to resolve the situation, even if it meant casting aside caution regarding respectability. Diversion from normative behaviour was tolerated to some extent when pity was deemed more appropriate than chastising, although the exceptional nature of the behaviour might be remarked upon. Examples of such instances in the sources include women supplicating in the Hippodrome, wives trying to secure the basic needs of their jailed husbands, female refugees queuing for bread and alms distribution in Alexandria, and a widow petitioning the Emperor in the street for justice.[1639] The extent of the crisis and the pity it evoked moderated opinions when women frequented places otherwise deemed unsuitable. Showing devotion to the family, especially a husband, was a mitigating factor when female actions did not comply with expected behaviour. Rage expressed for a good cause that served the interests of the community was also a justifiable excuse for behaviour that was not considered fit for women or fell outside the usual limits of social norms: examples include the women who attacked a suspected enemy in Thessaloniki and *Iconophile* women preventing *Iconoclast* actions.[1640] Self-inflicted misery, on the other hand, was not pitied. A girl who became destitute after giving away her fortune and falling into prostitution is scorned by her neighbours who are unaware of the good deed that lead to her situation.[1641]

The presence of a husband usually safeguarded a woman's good reputation when in contact with other men, but not even that always protected her from slander. *Pratum Spirituale*, for example, includes a story about a childless couple. Becoming a parent was important for both wives and husbands, for whom having children and heirs was of great concern. The husband in the story therefore invites an old ascetic named Daniel to go home with him and bless his wife, so that they might have a child. The blessing is successful and the wife becomes pregnant, but rumours spread that it was the old ascetic and not the husband who was the actual father. The rumour was eventually

[1639] See the discussion in Chapters IV.D., V.C., and VII.A, 233-4.
[1640] See Chapter V.C, 199, 201.
[1641] Moschos, *Prat.Spir.* chapter 207. See Chapters II.E, 88, IV.C, 160, IV.D, 162, 166.

quashed with the help of a miracle after the child was born.[1642] Here, however, neither the presence of the husband nor the religious status of the old ascetic prevented rumours being spread by malicious individuals. Another example is given in a poem: a man talks to a woman on a social occasion with the purpose of persuading her to engage in a secret liaison later on, despite the fact that her husband is there with her.[1643] These sources point to existing notions that a woman might not be beyond attempted pursuit even if her spouse is present, and therefore is not beyond suspicion of impropriety, either, if there are other reasons to suspect her morals.[1644] As mentioned above, a wife's presence at any public performance without the consent of her husband was sufficient cause, legally, for divorce. If a wife was suspected of having a liaison with another man mere communication in public could give the husband the legal right to take actions against her, the exception being conversations in a church.[1645] Amidst such scrutiny, both families and wives had to find a balance between the degree of segregation, social mingling and the care of daily responsibilities.[1646] The company of a husband was no guarantee against physical harm either, as illustrated in the story about families travelling home from religious festivities and being attacked by robbers on the road outside Jerusalem.[1647]

Women on both ends of the moral scale could, to some extent, transgress the normative behaviour generally expected of women. The supposed sanctity and pious nature of Matrona made it possible to describe her in situations that otherwise would have been considered unsuitable for a woman. She distributed oil from a relic among the clergy and to male individuals in the congregation, and she travelled around Palestine in an attempt to escape her husband, eventually settling as a hermit in an abandoned pagan temple outside Beirut.[1648] Other female hermits and ascetics are similarly depicted in unusual circumstances, their righteousness and spirituality authorising certain deviations from expected female behaviour. Devout deeds were also accepted as an excuse among ordinary women. Charity work and religious events gave relatively safe moral grounds for women to venture into public space. The pious widow Euphemia is described visiting prisoners and helping poor and ill people in the streets and squares, giving them food and comfort. She is also said to have searched inns and roads and monasteries outside the city looking for strangers in need of her help.[1649] This, again, shows the complex relationship between ideal and praxis: ministering to the needy could take women into the streets and other public places, and into contact with various individuals. It should nevertheless be remembered that such tasks were not for all but were the pursuit of the very pious few. Others showed charity in ways that suited their social

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[1642] Moschos, *Prat. Spirit*. chapter 114.

[1643] *Anth. Gr.* V:242 (by Erathostnenes Scholasticus, 6th century). Part of the poem is quoted in Chapter VI.A, 204.

[1644] Cf. Herrin 1984, 171-2, commenting that women were "vulnerable to all kinds of slurs if they did not fulfil the prescribed roles of wife and mother".

[1645] *Nov*. 117 c. 15 pr. - (1). Beaucamp 1990, 163-4. See Chapter III.A, 106.

[1646] Cf. Beaucamp 1992, 348, although she sometimes takes recommendations and comments on female seclusion too much at face value, not considering that the reason behind them might be that practice did not always follow norms.

[1647] Moschos, *Prat. Spirit*., chapter 165. See Chapter VII.B, 237.

[1648] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapter 12-14. See e.g. Chapters III, 106, 124 also n. 715, and 134-5.

[1649] John of Ephesus, *Lives*, chapter 12 (6th century) (Brock & Harvey, 1987, 126-30). See Chapter III.C, 132-3. Cf. Talbot 1997, 134, and Talbot 1994, 105-6, 122.

position: the noblewomen in Amida, for example, provided Euphemia with resources for her work.

On the other end of the scale, female performers lingered in the strange hinterland of being both admired for their art and susceptible to ill-favoured rumours about their reputation, their profession in itself demanding public exposure. This did not automatically put them on the fringes of society, even if they on occasion were associated with prostitutes in juridical terms. They might be morally scorned, but they were accepted as part of urban culture and some of the restrictions applying to other women did not concern them. The same applied to women keeping inns and public houses as well as female members of an innkeeper's family. The attitudes of the surrounding community depended on the individual, her wealth and her capacity to negotiate her position by other behavioural means. In the end, even prostitutes had the theoretical opportunity to change their lives and to redeem themselves.

Fortune afforded women certain leverage. Even if rank was not necessarily connected with wealth, a personal fortune gave her social status and through that possibilities in society. Theodore's mother, for example, although being a female innkeeper with illegitimate children, had some wealth. She had enough funds to buy expensive gold accessories for her son and to contemplate putting him in the Emperor's service in Constantinople. She also employed servants at the inn. Later she is described as having contracted a favourable marriage in Ancyra.[1650] A poem by Agathias attests to the importance of financial considerations when choosing a wife: a man may wish to avoid marriage due to the lack of assets on the part of the female object of interest.[1651] Another example is the young Athanasia in the *Life of St. Matrona*, whose husband takes a special interest in her fortune, while the same fortune to some extent enabled her to shape her future according to her own wishes.[1652] An aristocratic and very wealthy women such as Anicia Juliana could use her fortune to emphasise her family's and her own position and importance, to the extent of threatening the prestige of new rulers. Wealth affected a woman's social position and how social norms applied to her or were possibly stretched, and how she was looked upon socially.

There was some recognition of life's practicalities for most women. Although the ideals concerned the majority of women in some ways, not all were privileged enough to afford attendants to run errands or accompany them, and other means had to be employed to maintain the required level of decorum. Women of the middle and lower classes tended to be involved in activities that deviated from idealised demeanour. It was accepted that these women could not adhere as strictly to demands on female modesty as women from higher social strata. Agathias clearly recognises this in his remarks in connection with an earthquake, differentiating between lower classes and individuals of breeding and distinction.[1653] These women constituted a larger proportion of females in any city, compared to the privileged classes.

Whereas women of the lower classes were exempted from the strictest codes, mechanisms may have existed to deal also with some eccentric behaviour among those who were supposed to

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[1650] *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapters 3, 5-6, 25.
[1651] *Anth. Gr.* V:267. See Chapter VI.A, 203.
[1652] *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, chapters. 38-47. See Chapter III.C, 126-7, IV.D, 165.
[1653] Agathias, *Hist.* V.3.7. See Introduction, 3.

comply more diligently with the social demands of female decorum. The *Life of St.Theodore of Sykeon* contains stories of women possessed by an evil spirit that makes them behave improperly.[1654] The primary intent of such stories is to show the spiritual powers of the saintly person and they are part of a set of religious *topoi*, but there may be a sub-layer. As long as unfit behaviour, usually in the form of vulgarities and rash actions possibly resulting from mental problems, could be attributed to the malignance of an evil force that could be removed and the person cured, temporary deviations from expected behaviour could be overlooked in the long-term effort of keeping individuals inside regular society.

Consideration should also be given to the men involved in social interaction, as they also influenced positions of negotiation. A man's station in life affected how women could be, were, or had to be in contact with him. Contact with ecclesiastic men did not normally threaten a woman's reputation. The man's rank also affected the level to which a woman had to comply. Imperial emissaries could ask to meet the daughters in Philaretos' household and an Emperor might even have the daughter of a high official as a mistress.[1655] A visiting soldier seduces an innkeeper's daughter and a passing imperial messenger and former performer becomes the father of Theodore of Sykeon.[1656] The power and social position of a man also affected the social situation.

This moves the discussion on to situations in which there were digressions from normative behaviour. When a woman diverged from sexual morality it was considered a severe indiscretion. In cases in which female behaviour was contrary to social standards and a woman had surpassed the limits of proper moral behaviour there were still mechanisms for redemption and a return to a respectable position in society. Theoretically, a change in lifestyle was possible and through that redemption and acceptance in society, at least if the right circumstances prevailed. Even a prostitute could redeem herself if she was willing to divert from her former path. The change usually had to be substantial, preferably including serious repentance, and it had to be in proportion to the moral transgression, but social respectability could be reinstated. A 'bad' past could be balanced with good through making amends and leading a more religious life, but fortune or high rank could also be a ticket to acceptance in society.

There was flexibility within the limits of normative behaviour in day-to-day life and some transgressions passed having only attracted some moral scorn and gossip among people in the surrounding society. Others were severe enough to go beyond the limits of accepted deviation, and the consequences could be social or legal, or both. Social prejudices could ostracise an individual and exclude him or her in different degrees from supportive societal networks. One story on social ostracism set in early-6th-century Alexandria tells of a pagan and orphaned formerly rich girl finding herself destitute and turning to prostitution in early 6th century Alexandria.[1657] When she became ill and wanted to become a Christian, and was therefore in need of help and a sponsor, her neighbours scorned her: nobody was prepared to help an ill-famed woman with a blemished lifestyle. Another

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[1654] E.g. *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon,* chapter71. See Chapter III.A, 107.

[1655] *Life of St. Philaretos*, 4.c. *John of Antioch*, IV.662. See Chapters II.A, 61-2, and VI.A, 209.

[1656] *Life of St. Mary / Marinos*, chapter 9 – 10. *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, chapter 3. See Chapter IV, 149, 161 n. 995.

[1657] Moschos, *Prat.Spir.* chapter 207. See above, 264 n. 1641.

story tells of a Cypriot woman who confides a dark secret to the patriarch in writing. After his death she is in agony in case the piece of paper falls into the wrong hands and exposes her to the whole community: she would be dishonoured in the eyes of local society and would be spoken ill of.[1658] Some offences, of course, had also legal consequences.

Having a tainted reputation did not necessarily marginalise a woman, depending on the local community and the reasons for her shame. The *Miracles of St. Artemios* tell of a pious woman named Anna who employed her neighbour's young daughter Euphemia to go and light a lamp in front of an icon in the church when she was too busy to do it. The neighbour, Ioannia Maxima, is described as being of ill repute, although no reason is given.[1659] This does not prevent Euphemia's family from living a seemingly normal life in the community, or herself from being employed by her pious neighbour to run a recurring errand and eventually being saved by the saint for that reason when afflicted by the plague.

There is a significant distinction between decorum in general and sexual morality. Although they are linked and the codes for decent behaviour reflect notions of sexual morality, they are two distinct phenomena judged on different levels. Ideas about behaviour are discussed in normative texts, but no laws regulated public morals and there were no sanctions to be implemented. Sexual behaviour, on the other hand, was regulated to some extent by jurisprudence, hence certain sexual transgressions were punishable by law.[1660] Institutions other than governmental authorities also inflicted punishment. In a society in which the Church played an important role and was tightly interwoven with its activities, chastisement inflicted by church authorities could be as serious for a person's social prestige and life as sanctions imposed by secular authorities. Some church canons set out the punishment for both '*porneia*' (sexual immorality) and adultery, which usually involved excommunication with strict rules governing acceptance back into the Church and to communion. This was very public penitence. The penitent person was excluded for several years and then had to regain entry to the congregation slowly, in four steps: staying outside the church doors exclaiming, gaining access to the *narthex*, prostrating and officially repenting, and only then regaining access to the holy communion as part of the congregation.[1661] This did not prevent people from committing *porneia*, but the social stigma may have encouraged caution.

Penalties and castigation hit those women hard who were supposed to live according to virtuous ideals. Those already in the 'pariah' category had to suffer society looking down on them and were subject to some discriminating rules, laws and regulations. A fallen maid, wife, virgin or nun, on the other hand, risked hard punishment for transgressions, especially those of a sexual nature. A prostitute risked being a social outcast because of her professional activities, whereas older legislation still mentioned capital punishment for adultery.

Consequences for faulty behaviour might be inflicted by various parties. The family or

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[1658] *Life of St. John the Almsgiver*, chapter 46. Messis 2006, 547.

[1659] *Mir. St. Art.*, no. 34 (early 7th century Constantinople). Cf. Crisafulli & Nesbitt 1997, 279-80, discussing Ioannia Maxima and assessments of her as possibly a prostitute.

[1660] Adultery was one, as were sexual relationships between certain categories of individuals. Beaucamp 1992, 368. Messis 2006, 669-73. See e.g. Chapter II.D, 84-5, II.E, 95 n. 547.

[1661] Cf. e.g. *Trullo*, 86, 87. Leontsini 1989, 185-7. Cf. Messis 2006, 685-7 on penitence as a form of social control.

people close to a woman could impose disciplinary action in private, which might involve physical punishment, confinement or humiliating punishments such as cutting off the hair.[1662] Clipping a woman's hair was an old symbolic act that could mark and punish unacceptable love relationships for example, as in two of Agathias' poems.[1663] Chastisement by the community could take the form of exclusion from social activities, avoidance, shows of contempt or the refusal to give help and support when it would normally have been provided within the social network. Depending on the transgression, the religious establishment punished through degrees of exclusion and excommunication, in a public redemption process. The last canon from the *Quinisextum* Church counsel in 691/2 nevertheless urges compassion and consideration of individual circumstances when deciding on penalties to heal a sick soul gone astray.[1664] Legal punishments for transgressions or real crimes could take the form of financial penalties, discriminating rules and regulations such as exemption from heritance or loss of privileges, imprisonment, physical punishment, and ultimately capital punishment. The gravity of a violation in the eyes of society and the social position of the offender affected the level and type of disciplinary action. The need to keep women segregated from men was, at least in theory, adhered to even in punishments. Convents were used in more severe cases, either as temporary confinement or as places in which to be enclosed for life.[1665] Although keeping women in convents and having them guarded by other women was the ideal, the source material reveals that this was often reserved for women higher up the social scale, and other evidence shows that ordinary women could be kept in normal prisons.[1666]

Stories related to the Iconoclastic controversy mention torture being used against women, too. One tells of the imprisonment, interrogation and torture of a woman from a convent accused of having sexual relations with a holy man (an *iconophile*) during the early Iconoclastic period.[1667] Executions are also mentioned, of rebellious *iconophile* women and the Empress and daughters of a dethroned emperor, for example.[1668] In these stories, of course, the punishment is connected not so much to any improper conduct or actual crime on the part of a woman as to the fact that they were on the wrong side in an ideological or political conflict. Nevertheless, they show that women were not, either in theory or in practice, exempted from any type of punishment, including corporal punishment and execution.

In sum, codes of chaste behaviour and female segregation differed among women of different social standing. Women of dignity in particular were bound by codes of proper behaviour, but any woman who did not wish to be associated with women of ill repute in various degrees abided by the rules of both dress and gender segregation. Women had to be careful of their reputation, but

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[1662] Cf. Messis 2006, 395, noting that cutting a woman's hair was a sign of humiliation, as the hair was considered the ornament of the female sex.

[1663] E.g. *Anth. Gr.* V:218 & 220 (by Agathias Scholasticus, 6th century), the first one also mentions flogging.

[1664] *Trullo*, 102.

[1665] Cf. e.g. Beaucamp 1990, 184. See also, Chapter II.E, 94.

[1666] E.g. Theophanes, *Chron.* 6098, 6102 [AD 605/6, 609/10]. See Beaucamp 1992, 77 on evidence about imprisoned women from papyri in Egypt. See Chapter VIII.A, 259-60.

[1667] *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, chapters 21, 32. Kazhdan & Talbot 1991/1992, 394-5. See Chapter VIII.A, 260.

[1668] See Chapters III, 102, and V.B, 187.

this did not stop them from participating in social activities outside the private sphere: it only meant that measures were taken to maintain the necessary degree of respectability. Various methods were used to comply with demands for the protection of female dignity and chastity, as well as for gender segregation. Windows, doors and balconies, galleries in churches, separate hours for visiting public baths or viewing relics, the use of a veil, attendants and employing women of the lower classes all functioned as intermediary implements through which women could partake in society outside the domestic sphere in a virtuous way. Women also formed female networks through which various matters could be arranged. Rank and civil status directed the manner of attendance and the company kept when in public space. Some occasions and locations were considered more proper for women, religious events usually being the most acceptable. Such events were abundant in that many activities in society were linked to the religious sphere. However, secular feasts and social gatherings, as well as everyday tasks, also took women out in public space. In providing opportunities for women to participate in ways that complied with required decorum, society acknowledged female public participation. Within limitations, women of most categories were somewhat visible in public space, despite the ideological preference of them remaining in the domestic sphere.

There were places in which, under normal circumstances, women were rarely seen. Occasionally they found themselves having to or choose to enter male-dominated space: this could be personal involvement in a court case, providing for family members in prison, or petitioning for loved ones in the Hippodrome in front of the Emperor. Pity might make digressions acceptable, as did a collective crisis or piety, but personal fortune was also a moderating factor affecting how female behaviour was assessed. Attempts to control women's public behaviour tended to be made via cultural rhetoric and social pressure. Most punishments for faulty behaviour were of a social nature, except in clear legal cases.

Some groups of women did not comply either fully or partly with common norms of female behaviour. Prostitutes lived on the fringes of accepted society, often looked upon with disdain because of their way of life. Female performers as well as innkeepers and their family and employees were also easily included among moral libertines, but they did not necessarily have to lose moral credibility if they stayed free from sexual entanglement, and as individuals they could gain fame and esteem even if their profession represented the opposite of normative female behaviour through its public nature.

C. Tradition and transformation

Views regarding the female tend to be long-lived and to survive over centuries. Many ideas and ideals inherited from Antiquity held throughout the Byzantine period, which is not to say that there were not fluctuations in the attitudes. Different periods brought out varying aspects and highlighted certain tendencies. Some themes remained constant, whereas there occurred variation in some of the motives. There was both continuity and change over time. The way ideology explained female protection and exclusion changed, as did the saintly role models presented in hagiographies. There were fine variations in attitudes related to the relationship between women and public space during

the 6th to the 8th centuries, manifesting in subtle changes in cultural life, social practice and behavioural patterns. The aim in this section is to give an overview of the changes and their typical features in the different centuries.

One feature of pre-modern societies was the differentiation of male and female participation in the public sphere. This often resulted in varying ideals of female exclusion, separation or seclusion from what were considered distinctive male activities and male space.[1669]

On the general level these aspects persisted from Antiquity through the Byzantine era. However, although protection and exclusion of women continued, the rationalisation behind such necessity changed somewhat. There was not a complete turnover and alternative explanations continued to exist, but there were shifts in the focal points. As Beaucamp points out, the emphasis on female weakness, feebleness and inherent inferiority, which was still prominent in the Theodosian laws of the 5th century, weakened slightly and was moderated in Justinian's codification and new legislation.[1670] Neither natural causes nor physical incapacity are evoked (like regarding mutes, for example), but tradition is given as an explanation for excluding women from juridical functions, mentioned alongside slaves among individuals lacking such civic rights.[1671] Justinian's own legislation, while not doubting female intellectual capacity, highlights female prudence as a reason for regulation, and the natural division between tasks that are suitable for women and duties they should not pursue.[1672] Although attitudes remained conservative, there was a shift from using female natural feebleness as an argument to focusing on appropriate female morality.[1673] This development continued: the need for female decorum is the explanation given when a 9th-century *Novella* introduced by Leo VI bans women as witnesses from law courts, requiring them to keep out of male business, out of such distinctive male space, and away from the gaze of all the men residing there.[1674] Whereas conceptions of inherent female feebleness prevailed, aspects such as female dignity, morals and virtue were increasingly highlighted from the 6th century onwards when ideological boundaries and social restrictions on the female part of the population were justified.

There were also variations in attitudes towards the movement of women outside the domestic sphere. The ideal and *topos* according to which honourable women, especially maidens, should keep to the family quarters lasted, but there were modifications in how it was presented in different narrations. In earlier hagiographies women of all social classes and civil status are relatively frequently portrayed moving outside the domestic sphere, albeit usually accompanied in the proper manner. On the other hand, it is symptomatic that the male protagonist in a text relating to the late 8th century emphasises the seclusion in which the daughters of the family are kept.[1675] Early

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[1669] Cf. e.g. Cranny-Francis et al. 2003, 237-42, Landes 1988, 1-10, Hanawalt et al. 2000, x, and Økland 1998, 128-33. See the discussion in Chapter II.A, 57-62.
[1670] Beaucamp 1990, 11-6, 26-7.
[1671] *Dig*. 5.1.12. § 12. Beaucamp 1990, 34.
[1672] E.g. *Just.* 2.55.6. Beaucamp 1990, 34, 54.
[1673] Cf. Beaucamp 1990, 26-7, 34.
[1674] Leo VI, *Nov*. no. 48, 3-5, & 11-24 (ed. p. 189-190). Cf. Geanakoplos 1984, 304. Messis 2006, 574-5. See Chapter II.E, 93.
[1675] *Life of St. Philaretos*, 4.c (Rydén 2002, 89). See Chapter II.A, 61-2.

hagiographies on women tend to portray heroines such as Matrona of Perge making long journeys, whereas later ones concentrate on the suffering housewife or the zealous nun engaged in activities in and around the local area. Kazhdan refers to examples from later centuries supporting the claim that attitudes towards female seclusion, especially among the nobility and respected society, became stricter over time.[1676] Connor observes changes towards the middle Byzantine period. She notes a decline in public roles for women from the 7th century onwards, including in the ecclesiastical field with a decline in the role of deaconess and the holy virgin and the stricter seclusion of women in the nunnery or the home.[1677] Similarly, Messis, discussing sources from middle and late Byzantine on the ideal of confining unmarried daughters in particular to protect their virginity and reputation, points to a more strict attitude in these matters in the later period.[1678]

One source indicating retightened social attitudes while redefining social institutions is a *Novella* introduced by Leo VI that includes a provision for dissolving a betrothal agreement if the girl loses her virginity.[1679] Justinian legislation already gives more weight to the fiancée, bringing betrothal closer to marriage: an assault on a fiancée, for example, is equated to an assault on a concubine or a wife, requiring the same punishment.[1680] Divorce legislation also steadily became more rigorous, making the dissolution of a marriage increasingly more difficult. Constantine I was severe in many ways in his legislation regarding women.[1681] Justinian legislation showed more understanding of the female population and became more egalitarian, in terms of gender, with regard to divorce and related issues. His divorce laws were the first to treat both sexes equally in many respects, but this did not mean more lenient divorce legislation.[1682] On the contrary, it often imposed stricter conditions on men by tightening the divorce laws for husbands, thereby bringing the positions of the two genders closer. Justinian I legislated against divorce by mutual consent, making it almost impossible to dissolve a marriage on such grounds.[1683] Not everyone embraced with joy such notions and changes did not always proceed in a straight line: Justinian's successor Justin II withdrew this specific clause. It is possible that the Emperor yield to public pressure against unpopular legislation when he lifted the prohibition of divorce by mutual consent in 566.[1684] That these things had a practical bearing is evidenced in some papyri on consensual divorce, several of which date from around 569.[1685] Nevertheless, Christian moral attitudes increasingly influenced

[1676] Kazhdan 1998, 2-3.
[1677] Connor 2004, 163. Cf. Herrin 1994, 191-99.
[1678] Messis 2006, 617-21.
[1679] Leo VI, *Nov*. no. 93 [p. 309, 9-13]. Messis 2006, 618.
[1680] See Chapter II.D, 84-5.
[1681] E.g. Beaucamp 1990, 163.
[1682] *Just.* 5.17.10-11, *Nov*. 22 c. 3-19, *Nov*. 117 c. 7-14 (AD 542), *Nov*. 127 c. 4 (AD 548), 134 c. 11 (AD 556). See Beaucamp 1990, 174-7, 222-6, and Arjava 1996, 182. See Chapters. II.E, 89-90, VII.C, 245 n. 1554.
[1683] *Nov.* 117 c. 7-14 (AD 542).
[1684] *Nov*. 140. Arjava 1996, 182, 185.
[1685] *P.Flor*. i. 93 = *MChr* 297 = *FIRA* iii. 22 (569). Arjava 1996, 182, 185. *P.Cair.Masp*. II 2715r (reign of Justinian I), *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67155 (566-570/573), *P.Lond.* V 1712 (569), *P. Lond.* V 1713 (569), *P.Cair.Masp*. III 67311 (569/570 ?), *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67121 (573). Ruffini 2011, 17, 331-2, 342, 361, 561. According to a slightly different document from Nessana (AD 689), Nonna, with her mother and seven witnesses present, yields all property claims, after which her husband John releases her from the marriage, Kraemer 1958, 161-7, no. 57.

official positions on marriage as an institution and thus affected legislation, making divorce less attractive and increasingly difficult to achieve legally.

Moral sentiments also affected views on prostitution. The 6th century still showed some liberality in that prostitution was not punishable according to *Codex Justinianus*, although it brought infamy. Beck notes a shift in attitudes in the 8th century, where the *Ecloga* introduced and prescribed corporal punishment for prostitutes.[1686] In the meantime, on the secular level there was a change in attitudes to eroticism in parallel with the increasing influence of the Church and its morality on society. The trend was already evident in the 6th century. Prostitution was always considered a regrettable occupation, but nothing tangible had been done to subdue the practice, other than through moralising. It was Justinian and Theodora who took both legislative and practical measures in their attempts to change the situation of prostitutes so as to facilitate departure from the profession.[1687] The problem was addressed with certain compassion in the 6th century, but the turmoil of the following centuries hardened moral attitudes.

A positive trend for women, which had some Christian roots but was also influenced by the Roman tradition, was occasionally to put men and women on, if not on an egalitarian at least a somewhat equal footing. There was more than a mere sense of symmetry. Inherent in Justinian's divorce legislation was the notion of the more equal treatment of men and women. It was also stated in some of his other laws that there should not be one law for men and another for women. As Arjava points out, from the Principate onwards Roman law seemed to treat women as legal subjects with almost the same rights as men, and such principles were endorsed and continued in Justinian's legislative compilation. Apart from restrictions related to public office and a few other matters, women had in many cases relatively similar legal rights as men.[1688] On the other side of the coin, Justinian legislation also prescribes equal punishment for the same types of transgression regardless of gender. Indeed, Beaucamp notes a marked shift in Justinian legislation towards a more egalitarian stance between the genders.[1689] Beyond the legislative dimension, this trend is also visible in their symmetrical treatment in art, literature, religious practices and manifestations of political power, as discussed in previous chapters. These cultural features were palpable especially in the 6th century, after which such parallel treatment was more sporadic, but still lived on as a cultural idea.

There was, of course, no gender equality in the modern sense, but there was a period when the position of women gradually rose in cultural and social awareness to the point at which they in some respect could be portrayed and imagined as well as be visible acting on a similar standing with men, as their counterparts. I define this 'egalitarian' trend as partial gender equality within the boundaries of decency achieved through a degree of separation or segregation and presented as symmetry, even though men continued to occupy the more prestigious positions. Morality and female modesty were always influential in guiding ideal female behaviour even if equal benefits were occasionally assigned. After a peak in the 6th century the tide turned again towards a more

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[1686] *Ecloga*, 17.19-20. Beck 1986, 95.

[1687] E.g. punishment for pimping, possible civic rehabilitation when quitting the profession, and the creation of monastic institutions as places of retreat for former prostitutes. See the discussion in Chapter IV.C, 161-2.

[1688] Arjava 1996, 255-6.

[1689] Beaucamp 1990, 25-6.

conservative view on the relationship between the genders and female presence in public space.[1690] Constantinou offers a similar interpretation: "The periods in which Byzantine women enjoyed more social liberties were before the ninth and after the eleventh centuries."[1691] The idea that a woman could hold a powerful position persisted after the 6th century. Strong female figures continued to feature especially among imperial women, even though on an ideological level the sense for a certain symmetrical balance in the relationship between the sexes faded. These trends are also manifested in the material culture of the 6th century with its fair amount of female representation, including the female martyrs in San Apollinare Nuovo, and the strong female presence in the 6th-century mosaics in St. Demetrios in Thessaloniki, which is lacking in its later mosaics.[1692] Female visibility in public space culminated in the 6th century in some ways, but as society closed in on itself in the troubled times, women were steered away from public space and the occurrence of female images diminished.

Changing tides can be traced in the different types of female role models presented in literature as well as in other art forms, and in the female presence in public space. Imperial ladies played an important part as public figures. Women connected to the imperial family stood early on in an influential position: they were role models on a pious level, they could function as grand donors and public entrepreneurs, and they could use the power of their personal prestige behind the political scene. A mother or sister might play a part in the reign of a young emperor, and in mid-5th-century Ravenna, which at that point was the capital of the West Roman Empire, the scarcity of adult male heirs to the Western Imperial throne put Galla Placidia in a strong position: this was also visible in the pictorial representations in the city at the time.[1693] However, before the 6th century the public image of an empress usually took third place, kept partly in the background, whereas the Emperor and his male co-regents were at the front of the stage. During the 6th century the empress rose to the position of almost an official counterpart to the emperor, giving her a strong and prominent ceremonial role as well as a certain political role in some sense. The path was cleared for occasional temporary female rule and the transition of imperial power through female members of the family. Although this ideological adjustment primarily concerned the highest levels of society and the main political players, it was also manifested in public space, and thus influenced ideas in society.

Another shift in accentuation, comparable with the rise of the empress, was the changing focus on motherhood. Good mothers had always been in high esteem and motherhood was seen as a woman's primary role, but the prestige was taken to a new level with the rise of the cult of the Virgin Mary, especially in her role as Theotokos, the Mother of God. The emphasis was not only on the Heavenly Queen and some sources put a new focus on the maternal parent and the relationship between mother and child.

[1690] Cf. Brubaker 2005, 444, with similar conclusions.

[1691] Constantinou 2005, 164.

[1692] On S. Apollinare Nuovo, see Deichmann 1958, Abb. 98-107. On St. Demetrios, see Cormack 1969, Plates 2-9, Brubaker 2004b, 71-8, 86, 89-90, Figs. 2-14.

[1693] Written evidence indicates that both the imperial palace in Ravenna and the church of S. Giovanni Evangelista dedicated by Galla Placidia contained mosaics in which imperial women were well represented, Deichmann 1969, 120, 156-7. Even so, the male lineage and male emperors were emphasised in S. Giovanni, Brubaker 1997, 53-5.

What emerges from these trends and other scattered evidence is the growing consideration and significance of the female side of the family lineage. Agathias mentions the mother of Anthemius of Tralles and his other famous brothers in his history, praising her good fortune without reference to their father. Anicia Juliana displays matrilineal pride in her church restorations and dedicatory verses celebrating them. The tale of Theodore of Sykeon tells without particular disdain of his being raised by a matriarchal family consisting of two generations of independent women making their living as innkeepers, except for a few occasions when a possessed person refers to his background using abusive language in an attempt to put him off.

Legislation also showed signs of changed attitudes towards mothers. Arjava points out that it was Justinian law that finally made parents equal in terms of their children's inheritance in case of intestacy. In other words, the maternal and paternal lines were now considered equal: according to previous Roman jurisprudence the father-child line was the acknowledged one, and mothers who wanted to bequeath their children had to make a testament specifically for that purpose.[1694] This reflects both the heightened regard for the mother and the trend to achieve a gender balance.

There was also a shift in the role models presented by saintly women in hagiographies, from what could be called masculine behavioural patterns to more traditionally feminine models. Comparison of texts originating from the early part of the discussed period, or just previous to it, with stories written down at the end of the period or after reveals some difference. The heroine in the early tales often at some point lives a life of solitude largely in the same way as male hermits, occasionally even disguising herself as a monk and often travelling around relatively widely. The tales of Mary of Egypt and Matrona of Perge have been discussed repeatedly. Although these stories continued to be reproduced and read throughout the Byzantine period, new hagiographies rarely feature this type of female saintly persona.[1695] Instead they focus on pious wives suffering in their domestic milieu, remarkable coenobitic nuns or mother superiors, propagating the image of more modest, passive, enclosed and silent female piety.[1696] The 7th century was somewhat of a divider and transformation point in this sense.

Ashbrook Harvey notes the difference in how ascetic women are presented when she compares two collections of religious stories by known male writers, that of John of Ephesus from the 6th century concentrating on urban Amida and the other by John Moschos from the beginning of the 7th century focussing on Palestinian desert ascetics. The women in John of Ephesus's account, although few in number, are strong and wilful leaders, whereas those in Moschos' stories largely play some part or another in a pious battle against the temptations of fornication. Another difference is that solitude and separation from social life is more common (among males and females alike) in Moschus' texts, whereas John's narrative concentrates on an urban setting in which the players are socially active.[1697]

[1694] Arjava 1996, 96, 104.

[1695] Cf. Topping 1988, 216, noting that when Symeon Metaphrastes wrote his version of St. Matrona's life in the 10th century he no longer mentioned the shaving of her head and the donning of a male garment upon entering a monastery, which are included in the 6th-century version.

[1696] Cf. e.g. stories translated in Talbot 1996, *passim*.

[1697] Ashbrook Harvey 1981, 41. John of Ephesus, *Lives.* Moschos, *Prat.spir.*

The earlier model contained elements of a masculine form of asceticism, with women wilfully seeking their own religious path despite an ambiguous early life (such as Mary of Egypt) or by escaping from the traditional female duties inside the family (such as Matrona of Perge and her disciple Athanasia), sometimes literally assuming a male disguise for the purpose. These role models changed to portray women living out their piety in more traditional, feminine and passive ways as wives or nuns, from the start within the organised constraints of society in the home or in the convent. Nevertheless, the masculinity of their religious zeal is still emphasised in the texts. Some of these tendencies were not specific to women, however. There was a change in ascetic life in general, with a decline in the number of hermits, both male and female, and a shift towards co-habitation in monasteries and convents. Life as a hermit did, however, continue to play some part in male asceticism, but female hermits became increasingly rare as time passed by.[1698]

Female saints were elusive role models for most women, but the hagiographies and other devout literature also contain information on the religious habits of more ordinary pious women, such as attendance at night vigils. Women in the 4th century were not supposed to go there, discouraged by John Chrysostom, for example, and were even occasionally prohibited from doing so. This changed at the beginning of the 6th century and female presence at night vigils became increasingly commonplace.[1699] One of the features in some pious stories is the thronging of people around relics or holy persons, and attempts to get into a church during a special celebration, often with women mingling in the crowd. Most of these stories are in texts predating the mid-7th century. *Chronicon Pascale* paints a different picture when the Holy Lance is shown in the capital in 614, men and women being kept apart on separate visiting days. There was also a shift in the ordinary church service. Although noble women or women with children tended to keep to the balconies, if such were available in a church, and the northern aisle was considered the female side, there was originally no strict gender division inside the church space: it became common practice by the 9th and 10th centuries. Further, whereas deaconesses were originally admitted into the church sanctuary, later they were excluded.[1700] There are several reasons for the differences in the accounts, but there was a progressive trend towards segregated attendance at religious ceremonies.

An increased preference for seclusion, especially among women of the higher classes, might have created the need for more spaces for private devotion, providing highborn ladies with their own private chapels. Although there is no tangible evidence of such practice in the 6th century, and both aristocratic women and empresses are depicted going for prayer in churches, the 9th-century *Life of Mary the Younger* does mention the possibility of private chapels and a preference for prayer in the privacy of the home.[1701] The Council in Trullo (691/2) regulated the use of chapels in private homes, which indicates that they had become more common at that point, whereas 9th-century legislation further extended the types of religious ceremonies for which they were permitted to be used.[1702] Within lay religious life there is a trajectory showing an increase in female participation even in

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[1698] E.g. Hallsall 1999, 116-9, who discusses the shift in the types of new saints.
[1699] Cf. Taft 1998, 72-3. See the discussion in Chapters II.D, 81, III.A, 106-7, 109, III.D, 137-8, VIII.A, 257.
[1700] Cf. the discussion in Taft 1998, *passim*.
[1701] *Life of St. Mary the Younger*, 3 [p.257], 5 [p.260]. Talbot 1994, 111. See Chapter III, 99 and n. 568.
[1702] *Trullo*, 31 & 59. Leo VI, *Nov.* 15. See Chapter III, 99 n. 570.

ceremonies such as night vigils until the tide changed towards segregation and withdrawal, possibly during the 7th century. The use of private chapels seemed to become increasingly common, at least among those in society who could afford such arrangements, and there is a decline in reports of participation in night vigils.

There was a string of models of ideal womanhood and ideal female conduct, many of them symbolised by religious, mythological or historical figures. The Virgin Mary was the ideal *par excellence*. She combined traditional female values such as virginity, obedience and piety and projected an ideal image of motherhood, but she also represented female power and influence in her role as Heavenly Queen. Other religious figures, especially saints, provided a range of models of which the most important feature was religious zeal. There was a shift from active and driven 'masculine' religious ardour to more 'feminine', passive passion. On a secular level female literary figures from the pagan past served contemporary needs. Penelope in particular exemplified the patient, virtuous and chaste wife who also had the characteristics of an industrious mistress caring for the household and engaging in the most female of activities, those of weaving and making clothes. Other role models came from contemporary society via its leading ladies, especially the empress but also including other aristocratic women who, as donors and patrons but also through their conduct, prestige and power presented models for female social life.[1703]

Among the various trends it is not easy to determine how they influenced each other. It is not clear whether the more eminent position of empresses influenced cultural attitudes, or whether it was a shift in the social climate that allowed imperial women to gain importance. What is clear is that these trends were manifested in public space, art and literature. Some of the discussed cases are directly linked to imperial ideology and the strong position of the empress, such as the mosaics in Ravenna and Corippus' poem. Others reflect the more general and in terms of imperial ideology somewhat independent attitude leaning towards a certain symmetry between the sexes. Although the discussed cases could be considered somewhat isolated instances in a still predominantly male public society, it is noteworthy that many of them represent important and symbolically significant occasions and places, such as prominent manifestations of imperial ideology and notable religious events. Other expressions of the social climate of the 6th century include the expressed admiration for female performing artists and the somewhat forgiving attitude towards women of ill fame who were willing to turn over a new leaf.

It could thus be concluded that there was a peak of comparatively emancipated attitudes to women and the public side of society in the 6th and early 7th centuries. The sources portray active, wilful and publicly visible women among both historically known individuals and representations in art and literature, religious hagiographies included. Women had relative freedom of movability within the bounds of decency. The trend aligns with a sense of almost ceremonial symmetry between the sexes, portrayed in art and literature. Simultaneously, explanations of female exclusion and protection place less emphasis on reasons related to nature such as female inferiority and feebleness and focus on demands deriving from tradition and moral reasoning. Attitudes were still conservative,

[1703] Cf. Herrin 1984, 184-5, on Byzantine empresses as symbols of female leadership and that they were probably more visible to contemporary society than their counterparts in the Medieval west or the Muslim east.

but there was an equalising effect in that morality was also applicable to the male population, and female capability was acknowledged. Justinian law granted that women with an excellent reputation could handle their own important affairs, and generally recognised that some women, despite being excluded from dealing with official matters and legal issues, could have powerful positions, and as patrons could mediate between those in their charge.[1704] Such shifts in attitudes weakened sentiments of natural male superiority and levelled the ground for portraying men and women as counterparts in some respects. When attitudes shifted back to a more conservative view of women's social behaviour and public visibility the emphasis on morality remained, rather than explanations based on assumed natural female limitations.

Aligning with the idea of gender symmetry, which was typical of the 6th century in particular, was the notion of segregation. In the 6th and early 7th centuries this did not mean separation or seclusion from public space, but rather connoted separation between the sexes within it. Although the notion of symmetry between the sexes disappeared later and deliberately parallel depictions discontinued, gender segregation remained an ideal strongly bringing into range again ideas of seclusion regarding the female side. Stricter attitudes took hold from the late 8th century if not earlier: the intermediate period is more difficult to monitor and was a transitional phase.

The 6th century was still strongly influenced by Late Antique sentiments. Traditional urban culture continued to thrive. Influential imperial ladies were not unknown from previous centuries, but the empress became the acknowledged other half of a ruling imperial couple during the Justinian dynasty. This was matched by a rise in the parental status of the mother to be in better alignment with that of the father. On the spiritual level there were two models inherited from Late Antiquity, a rather 'male' type of female sanctity and increasing veneration of the Virgin Mary, especially as the Mother of God but also as a Heavenly Queen. Consideration given the Virgin Mary went hand in hand with the augmented position of both empress and mother. The atmosphere of the 6th century embraced attitudes admitting to some level of female ability, explanations implying natural incapacity being abandoned in favour of moral considerations. As long as the requirements for decorum were safeguarded, movement, activity and visibility in public space were relatively accessible to the female part of the population. There was even admiration for female performing artists, and a certain clemency in attitudes towards women with a less-than-good reputation or even of ill fame. The tendency towards certain congruity between the sexes combined with matters of propriety were articulated in various ways in public space as gender symmetry combined with gender segregation. This, of course, mainly reflects so-called high culture, in other words the viewpoints of the intellectual and ruling strata of society. To what extent such ideas were absorbed throughout the population is difficult to estimate beyond exposure through public art, literature and legislation.

Previous trends continued into the early 7th century but some shifts are visible, although the general thinning out of sources during the so-called 'Dark Age' makes it more difficult to follow the larger picture. Gender separation continued and was even strengthened, but the appreciation of symmetry between the sexes, on both a philosophical and an aesthetic level, lost momentum. This

[1704] *Just.* 2.55[56].6. Beaucamp 1990, 34. See the discussion in Chapters II.D, 80-81, and II.E, 88.

was a period of crisis, including economic decline, war and enemy attacks on major cities, and the sources reveal a society that is scaling down and closing in on itself. Survival and sustenance are among the topics in the sources when women are presented in public space, as they make their contributions to the upkeep of the family. Female refugees beg for alms in Alexandria and women in Thessaloniki have to give up their personal ornaments in payment for grain, or to join their families gathering provisions in abandoned enemy villages outside the city walls after a long siege. The image of the ruling couple is not forgotten in the power structure, but the position of the empress reverts to a side role as the imperial consort. Her closeness to the throne is not ignored, however, and the possibility of political power continues to be acknowledged. An empress could act as regent for a minor son, and women of the royal family could transmit imperial power through marriage. Secular administration and urban culture were undermined during the troubles of the 7th century, at least in minor city centres, and the influence of the Church as a supervising authority was strengthened. This further increased the influence of Christian values and moral views on common attitudes and behaviour. Several of the canons from the *Council in Trullo* (692) added to the restrictions on women, marking one junction towards a more enclosed and restricted female existence in this period.[1705]

The troubles continued into the 8th century, although there were signs of political and cultural recovery, and the effects of the slow change were being felt by the end of the century. The conflicts and a diminished realm restrained the movability of everyone in society to some extent, especially with regard to long-distance travelling. On the ideological level attitudes turned towards endorsing restrictions on female movability outside the domestic sphere. There may have been also pragmatic reasons for this, such as avoiding some parts of the urban milieu that had become rougher and more perilous. The tale of St. Mary the Younger (referring to the 9th century) serves as a comparison. She changed her habits when she moved from a small Thracian town to a larger provincial city near the border. Whereas she went eagerly to the town church, in the larger city she refrains from going out and prays at home so as to avoid the more populous crowds comprising both natives and foreigners.[1706]

Apart from possible dangers, moral aspects and considerations of honour continued to be important.[1707] Although the sources give fewer examples of active female participation in public space, there are many instances when visitors are brought into the home and meet the women there. The family was in focus. There was a renewed sentiment for the unit of individuals close in kin and for the family's esteem and honour, and a strengthening of patriarchal patterns. Just as society and the cities closed in on themselves behind their walls so, it seems, did the family. Taking shape alongside the imperial dynasties was a nobility consisting of powerful families with a clan-like mentality.[1708] The renewed emphasis on female withdrawal could be connected to this, in that female behaviour affected the honour of the whole family. Lower-class women continued their activities in

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[1705] Cf. Herrin 1992, 100, and Herrin 2013, 134. See also, Chapter VIII.B, 240, VIII.A, 250, 253.

[1706] *Life of St. Mary the Younger*, 3 [p. 257] & 5 [p. 260].

[1707] Cf. the story of the future Empress Theophano (referring to the 9th century), who as a maiden only went to the baths at dusk so as not to be seen by strangers, Talbot 1997, 121, and Kazhdan 1998, 2-3.

[1708] Nichanian 2012, 355, 373.

public space, but the ideology was more inclined to endorse restricted ambulation in public. The sources disclose two prominent spheres for this ideal of female confinement, the domestic and the monastic, both having urban significance. Many convents were situated close to towns or within cities. The higher classes that were especially keen on sheltering their women were also anchored in urban settings. The cultural esteem for the mother continued, and the mistress was the acknowledged manager of the household. A wife could play the role of a prudent advisor to her husband. Inside the monastery the abbess was prominent, but in the sphere of religious sources the time of the active and ambulatory heroine had passed: now she practised her piety from inside the home or the monastery.

Somewhat inconsistent with this development is the significance attached to female beauty, which was, of course esteemed earlier as well, but it assumed even greater importance. Texts from the early 9th century introduce the idea of imperial bride-shows, claiming that Empress Irene was the first to arrange such an occasion with a view to finding a suitable, beautiful, intelligent and noble bride for her son.[1709] The potential power associated with an empress continued, culminating in Irene's short solitary reign at the end of the 8th century.

The ideological framework was reproduced in different media, which also reflected the social realities. There was ongoing interaction between ideology and reality, the sources revealing a slow cultural shift. The increasing influence of Christian viewpoints combined with the social crisis affected the culture such that female performers seemed to become more marginalised, for example, as did some other Late Antique phenomena. The further closing in of society affected the application of traditional ideas of female seclusion. Women became less visible in public space, not because they ceased to participate in social activities but because, from a public point of view, cultural requirements emphasised a preference for female invisibility.

Beaucamp warns against using words such as promotion and deterioration with reference to the position of women. One should instead think in terms of change, given the complexity of the situation.[1710] Gender and space incorporate an intricate network of viewpoints and practical realities, and although it is tempting to speak in modern terms of more liberal or more conservative attitudes, the fluctuations between the centuries usually contained elements of both. It should also be kept in mind that what 21st-century eyes see as restrictions might not necessarily have been perceived as such among contemporary women.

Despite the shifts in ideology and praxis discussed above, much of the framework for female behaviour was rooted in long-lived attitudes and traditions. Many aspects represent a *longue durée* of a sort, conditions that change so slowly that they appear to endure over centuries and even millennia. When it comes to gender roles and social attitudes to women, many of the ideals, expectations and behavioural preferences were inherited from Antiquity and continued in one form or another far beyond the period under discussion, sometimes even into modernity. The fluctuations happened against this backdrop of long-standing attitudes to the feminine. The situation was not stagnant within these larger settings, and variations in the position of women and their relationship

[1709] *Life of St. Philaretos,* 4 [p. 83-93].
[1710] Beaucamp 1992, 370.

with public space are visible in different historical and social situations.

Given that the changes happened gradually, it is difficult to pinpoint exactly when and how attitudes and behaviour shifted, but the beginning of the 6th century clearly represented a different society from that of the end of the 8th century. It was not only the political, economic, cultural and social circumstances that changed, there was also a transformation in how women shared public space both ideologically and practically.

IX Conclusions

Byzantine culture and society, despite frequently being perceived as rather stagnant, were in a constant state of change, no more so than during the period under discussion in this study. The Empire lived through a series of political, economic and social changes, some of which were relatively radical. Following the last Late Antique upswing during the reign of Justinian I in the early 6th century, the Empire slowly evolved into its mediaeval form from a period of crisis, the so-called Byzantine 'Dark Age'. It experienced wars, plague, invasion by nomadic tribes, internal social turmoil, religious controversies and power struggles. All these came to a peak in the 7th century, but continued into the 8th century when a partial recovery began, although *Iconoclasm* brought new controversies. The mediaeval society that emerged from these centuries was left to struggle under altered economic, geographic and cultural circumstances. The territory had shrunk, the population had declined and there were shifts in the social culture. Sources show shifts in the focal points of the ideological framework as well as in social praxis. All these things also affected women and the social structures related to female behaviour.

This study integrated several horizons of early Byzantine urban society. The focal issue at their intersection concerns women and their relationship with public space. The discussion meandered between two levels of cognizance, the abstract level of ideology and the more tangible level of praxis: the two tend to be difficult to untwine as they affect each other, although they occasionally also stand in contrast to each other. On the social plane are the two opposite spheres of the public and the private. Although the focus is on public space, the dynamics between public and private are also considered, as the line between the two is fluid and they comprise the two sides of a whole, in other words the society in which individuals lived and acted. The private is often identified with the domestic sphere in pre-modern societies, in which the household, the family and domestic affairs characterised the life of an individual.

Women's presence in public space is approached from different perspectives on urban life, namely religious, economic and political, as well as what could be defined as the culture of aesthetics, entertainment and socialising. Clearly, women do not constitute a uniform group. Not only do they represent various segments of social class, as individuals they usually pass through different civil roles in their lives, from daughter and young maiden to wife, mother and possibly widow, or as an individual with a religious vocation, all of which bring their own particularities into the picture. Geography and cultural topography also have to be taken into consideration, in that a small provincial town constitutes a different urban setting than a large city or even the capital. These environments provided different milieus charged with different expectations, prejudices, rules and rituals, the tavern and the Hippodrome being very different localities from the bathhouse, the market streets and the church. There is even the time aspect to consider, in that feast days present different opportunities than regular life, and different hours of the day produce variation in how women should be present in common localities. These various horizons make up the intricate network of factors affecting women's relationship with public space.

There was a commonly held ideological framework within which female behaviour was envisioned to remain. Cultural rhetoric created a collective representation of female conduct in an

idealised form. Concurrently, sources give glimpses of the variations created by practical realities. The various horizons show that as the parameters changed, so did the expectations. Combining evidence from different types of sources facilitated the consideration of more variables, and the painting of a broader picture incorporating the diversities and modifications. Given the relative scarcity of material some tendencies might otherwise have passed unnoticed.

The trend of cultivating a certain gender symmetry that was characteristic of the 6th century becomes more evident when traces of it are found in diverse sources such as the mosaics in San Vitale and San Apollinare Nuovo, the poetic work of Corippus, copper coins, epigraphy and Procopius' description of Hagia Sophia. This particularity of the era of Justinian I and Justin II was among the more interesting findings of the research.

Different sides of society are observed through secular poems, historical texts and hagiographies, broadening the spectrum of both contemporary attitudes and the women included in the study. The poems in Agathias' *Kyklos* and the illustrations in the *Wiener Genesis* manuscript show female performers in a light that hagiographies and historical texts cannot deliver. In this sense the diverse sources have jointly contributed to the picture and to the conclusions.

Public space ranges from the harmless to the disreputable. The most innocent localities outside the home were churches and other ecclesiastic edifices. Here most women, regardless of their social standing, were beyond suspicion of impropriety. Getting to the church was a different matter: arrangements to ensure appropriate company had to be considered depending on the woman's class and civil status. At the other end of the spectrum are the more notorious venues where women of good reputation would not show themselves if it was avoidable. Among these venues were the circus, taverns and inns. Even here there were exceptions, and much depended on the event. The Empress and ladies of the court visited the Hippodrome on special gala occasions but were separated from the crowds, sitting in galleries reserved for them and surrounded by the court, guards and attendants. Personal distress and pity gave reason to look leniently on departures from conventional behaviour, and a slightly different set of codes were applied making allowances for what otherwise would be considered unfeminine or inappropriate female behaviour. Such women are depicted supplicating in front of the Emperor at the Hippodrome or outside the palace in the street, visiting a husband in jail, seeking help from a holy person, begging for alms, or even joining a lynching mob attacking someone who was considered an enemy. In most cases these women were married or widowed, and in some cases they appeared together as a group. Renowned piety also gave certain protection, as did ecclesiastic and religious connections. A religious reputation allowed for certain mobility for the purpose of the vocation, or for the sake of providing assistance or showing mercy to the needy. Charity was a well-looked-upon Christian virtue. As a rule, religion gave women a legitimate reason to be in public space, be it for the purpose of charity or participating in different religious celebrations, processions and worship. On the other hand, a dedicated religious life normally meant a solitary and secluded lifestyle, as nuns were not expected to seek society outside the convent. Socially and legally, however, a religious habit, at least in theory, afforded certain protection and integrity in public space.

Many public places were neutral ground and there were means by which women could ensure separate utilisation or at least some segregation and protection. Everyone was entitled to visit

bathhouses, regardless of social status, as long as the genders were segregated. Here again, it was the space between the home and the baths that could be ambiguous and where proper caution had to be taken not to be in the wrong place at the wrong hour, and to ensure arrival in a proper manner. This could be achieved by choosing the right hour for a visit and the right company for traversing the streets.

However, the hour of the day had various effects depending on the place and the circumstances. Venturing with servants to a women's baths in the protective darkness of dusk and lingering in the streets outside a bathhouse for men at the same hour have totally different implications. In the first case it was commendable behaviour for an unmarried maiden who used the protection provided by the darkness, whereas in the second case it implied promiscuity. Another example concerns visits to a night vigil in church, which despite some opposition, increased in popularity among pious women: staying out at night otherwise was worthy of rebuke and could be a reason for divorce. The religious aspect licensed the practice, but it could cause friction and lead to a domestic dispute. Given the inherent contradiction, there do not appear to be accounts of young maidens at such occasions. Wives, widows and women of the Church attended, and a network of female devotees functioned as a safeguard and a protective social system.

Places regularly and extensively frequented by men were to be avoided by all women of some level of good breeding and social standard. It could be the courthouse or the tavern, or even the busy streets of a large city. The higher the social status of the woman, the more such places were to be avoided. Alternatively, a proper escort provided a barrier by creating a demarcation line and ensuring the required segregation. As for common women, who constituted the majority of the female population, the company of a husband usually provided the necessary level of decency.

Properly escorted by servants and possibly with relatives or close friends, high-ranking women could travel over long distances. Women of lesser means and without male protection who wanted to travel sought the company of other women in a similar situation. As a group they could put themselves under the protection of a man. This is how Matrona sailed back to the capital, in the company of women already of some age, as they went to visit their grown-up children. A trusted man could be put in charge to provide protection on the journey, such as the sea captain employed to bring Matrona's young protegees from Beirut to Constantinople. A proper escort was a necessity, and there were different ways of arranging it. Wives travelled with their husbands, or alternatively with a male relative or a son. One option was a female relative especially if there were additional servants, a possibility open only to women of some wealth. Female friends could function as escort for each other, or some older women could chaperone the younger ones, and so forth. Even in the few cases mentioning young girls playing in the streets they are always in a group. A young woman on her own was the most vulnerable, both physically and morally, which Justinian legislation also reflects in its concern for girls arriving in the metropolis seeking material improvement but risking being enrolled by pimps. Women must have been familiarised with the proper ways of moving in public space according to social status from a young age.

Although protecting female modesty was an important issue, confinement at home was not the only alternative. There were several ways of protecting female virtue and of segregating the sexes. Escorts provided an invisible social and mental barrier against improper affiliation. Physical

separation could be achieved through the division of either space or time. ‘Gateways’ halfway between the private and the public, such as doorways, widows, balconies, galleries and litters provided a slightly screened off milieu in which women could follow activities or move around.

The women most at liberty to move in public were those of low social status and the widowed. The former may well have had no reputation to lose or meagre financial circumstances and a low social position that lowered expectations, especially if they were required to earn their keep in professions or employment that took them out of the domestic sphere. The case of widows was different. Although some were young, most had reached a mature age, which gave them status in their community and respectability through experience provided that they had kept to the social codes required of a wife. They were not virgins, nor were they connected to a man. They were therefore rid of two moral reasons for safeguarding female virtue, lessening the need for the strict monitoring of social interaction. They were fully in charge of their own property and the lack of a husband often meant shouldering the responsibility for the welfare of the family, especially if no adult son was at hand. A widow was required to act on her own account, thus for practical reasons she had to be capable of doing so without moral scrutiny from the surrounding society. She could still be the target of gossip and the need to keep her good name remained. Certain prudence in behaviour and a sensible choice of company and locations to visit prevailed, but in many ways widowhood brought a degree of emancipation, including freer movement in public space.

The entertainment sector involved work that did not fit the ideal picture of female tasks or female demeanour. Together with female innkeepers and also some public vendors, performing artists such as actresses, mime actors, dancers and musicians were in professions that put women among the public and that posed a risk to their moral reputation. Even so, many women worked in this sector, especially in Constantinople but also in other cities of the Empire.

Wealth or skill could compensate for improprieties in lifestyle to some degree. Accumulated personal wealth could mean acceptability for a female innkeeper. Talent might be appreciated in dancers and musicians, but personal conduct played its part in how female entertainers were morally evaluated as individuals. Movement up the social ladder was possible, although probably not common: falling down it due to misfortune was easier, but although reputation based on public behaviour was important, repentance, change and reclaiming social respectability were possible. There was a recognised distinction between female categories, meaning that the same behaviour patterns were not expected of all women. A livelihood judged as less reputable did not necessarily condemn the person concerned to the life of an outcast separated from more respectable society, although women of ill repute were shunned, especially prostitutes. Theodora’s ascendance from performer to Empress was, of course, exceptional, but female musicians and other performers were admired for their skill regardless of the shadow of immorality that easily afflicted their profession. The mother of Theodore of Sykeon was unmarried, of a family mostly consisting of women. Despite their disreputable trade, the two generations of female innkeepers managed to accumulate wealth and to become accepted members of the local community, their financial capacity probably being an instrumental factor. The fact that a woman’s personal wealth was significant from a male perspective is clear from Agathias’ poem in which marriage aspirations are abandoned for financial reasons, and from the story of the rich young wife Athanasia.

There is a slight dichotomy between the ideal of female concealment and the admiration of female beauty. Although the ideology professed that for reasons of modesty women should not be too visible, praise of physical beauty was constantly used particularly to show high regard for a woman. Admittedly, facial beauty was in focus and a good posture was referred to in more specific descriptions, given that a respectable woman concealed most of her body with clothing and usually also had her hair covered. *Miraculi St. Demetri* alludes to the importance of personal ornaments for a woman, emphasising the gravity of the situation in the besieged Thessaloniki because husbands even had to take their wives' earrings to pay for the overpriced grain. External appearance counted and was part of one's self-representation, and female beauty was also prestigious. Social position ultimately determined the extent to which a woman might be gazed upon by society. Keeping out of the public gaze was, after all, also a way of underlining social identity.

A woman signalled her position and social identity through her acquired *habitus*, which included personal appearance and behavioural patterns. The manner of being present in public space was part of this composition. Knowing the rules of behaviour outside the domestic sphere was part of the symbolic construction of each social group. It demonstrated class and status, which society could evaluate. All members of early Byzantine urban society had to understand the inherent social logic to navigate the different situations, in other words they had to possess a certain amount of social intelligence. The social rhetoric and models presented in different media guided women in adapting to social demands, showing them how to behave to suit the situation. In rare cases the deliberate choice of a certain *habitus* paved the way for a different route for action, if one is to give any credence to stories about women disguised as eunuch monks, for example.

Female presence in public space was not always official or elaborate. On the other hand, one could discuss what constitutes significant or non-significant public presence. It is difficult to estimate visibility or to quantify the witnesses of an activity in public space in ancient societies, beyond the fact that it was deemed worthy of presentation in one source or another. Women's lives were clearly not as public as the lives of the male population, but part of the problem is the qualitative evaluation of public presence, in other words what were considered valuable or significant activities in public. A woman venerating icons in a church might have been more private and less official than a male priest performing mass, but it was still religious veneration performed in a public place, space and sphere, where other people outside the strictly private domain could witness the act, observe the individual, make their evaluations and give their response. Similarly, participation in a church service as a member of the congregation was a relatively passive act but it was more public than prayer at home or in a private chapel.

A female musician might not attract official esteem in the way a male writer could, but female artists had visibility, were known in larger circles and were appreciated for their skills. Wealthy women on the highest level of society were esteemed through their patronage. Anicia Juliana managed to gain as much visibility, prestige and publicity as any man through her building activities, so much so that Emperor Justinian was rumoured to feel the need to overshadow her accomplishments as a builder through his own project. Large-scale public activities were not within the reach of most women, but the sources also reveal small-scale donations to church treasures. On a symbolic level the Empress and women of the aristocracy were undoubtedly the ones with the

highest visibility in public space, but on a practical level, common women were physically present in day-to-day public life.

All aspects must be considered in assessing women's presence in public, both those normally associated with the male population and typically feminine forms of participation. It is evident that presence and actions in public space were different for men and women. Many social norms circumscribed female behaviour, and in normal circumstances traditional female roles were not discarded. Hence, female participation in society followed a different path from that of males, being less visible and more indirect. This did not exclude women from participating in the public side of society or from frequently being present in varying ways both in the public sphere and in public space. Most of the time this presence was female in nature, suited to the moral codes and expectations of female behaviour that were inherent in society, but many methods for female participation existed within the framework of social norms. There were also exceptions due to external forces or personal conditions, which resulted in public behaviour that was more unusual for women. It depended on the circumstances whether such action, behaviour or presence was rebuked or could be excused.

Traditional ideals and ideas continued to affect common views on women and their proper behaviour, providing a certain rigour in the boundaries of female behaviour. In some ways this was constricting in that women were always at risk of being socially chastised for improper conduct. These basic guidelines concerned the average woman and normal circumstances, but the structure allowed room for adaptation taking into consideration various factors and the variety of social life. There were numerous deviations from the ideal mainstream settings. There were also fluctuations within the ideological framework over time. The domestic sphere was continuously considered the most appropriate for women, but on the practical level most female social groups participated in activities outside the private sphere in one way or another. Whereas for most women reality complied with the ideals of a housewife, there was work that took certain women outside the close circle of the family and the home. Inherent in the very idea of gender segregation was the need of professional opportunities for some women to secure separation for others. Society depended to some extent on certain women working outside the family domain, whereas wealthy women were involved with their property in financial life or did good of the community.

Although widely professed, female confinement to the domestic sphere operate on an ideological, moral and ethical level, through social pressure based on traditional norms. There were no significant legal regulations preventing women from being involved in society, not even in professional or financial activities outside the home. Legal provisions were basically intended to chastise women or disadvantage them financially if their profession or actions deviated too far from what was considered appropriate or respectable. The codes and boundaries of behaviour primarily worked on the social and moral level. Nevertheless, as this study has shown, whereas ideology could profess modesty, chastity and public invisibility, praxis was more fluid. Gender segregation was an ideal that was implemented to some extent in practical life, and some groups of women were more protected than others, but segregation did not necessarily imply exclusion from public society: on the contrary, female participation was explicitly facilitated.

Despite ideals of restriction to the domestic sphere, women were visible in the public arena

of society. They were involved in religious, economic, cultural, social and even political life, and as such were present in public space, both in person and symbolically as in art representations. This is not to deny that the domestic sphere was the major domain for female activities, but women from all social classes could be seen in public space. However, there was an intricate system of behavioural guidelines, which differed slightly depending on social status or circumstances. Within the ideological framework, women had to negotiate and balance their way through public space by following appropriate dress codes and behaviour, and choosing their company, the places they frequented, the manner in which they moved around, and even the proper time for it. The fact that sources comment on female behaviour and its relation to public space indicates that this was an issue in need of tutoring and reconsideration.

Earlier research has produced plenty of separate studies on the position of empresses and their public functions and of the situation of religious women in Byzantine society. Although they deal with aspects such as political significance and influence, little attention has been given to their presence in public space. The research also tends to concentrate on one group of women. The aim in this study was to combine a discussion on the female presence in public space with an investigation into the whole range of women in society, or at least as large a part of the female population as is possible to detect in the sources. This has produced a more varied and comprehensive picture of the situation.

The assumption in this study was not that women were as frequent in public space as male members of the population. Although no statistics can be produced, male individuals undoubtedly outnumbered women in public, with the possible exceptions of religious festivities and congregations gathering for a church service. The aim was to show how women, despite pronounced ideals to the contrary, were present in public space, and to point to the different aspects of the conditions of their participation in the more public activities of the community.

From the collective evidence of a variety of sources, seen as texts in a cultural fabric, this study has created a picture of the factors affecting women's presence in public space during the 6th to the 8th centuries. Byzantine culture was not stagnant during this time, and neither was the framework of women's lives and their involvement in the public side of society. The study reveals fluctuations in attitudes and praxis regarding women and public space during the centuries under discussion. The juxtaposing of a variety of sources points to some specific trends that could have remained undetected. As a result, it was possible to observe a tendency, especially in the 6th century, to envision a certain symmetry between the genders, which found expression in different media. The ensuing political, economic and social turbulence put pressure on society, which in turn changed the cultural climate. This study was able to define these developments.

New questions and possible approaches arose during the research process, showing that there are still many aspects of the social life and existence of the female population that could benefit from additional analyses. The hope is that the present study gives the incentive to develop new approaches to the history of women in Byzantine society.

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Bibliography

Abbreviations

AASS	*Acta Sanctorum*
AB	*Analecta Bollandiana: Revue critique d'hagiographie* (Brussels: Societé des Bollandieste)
BF	*Byzantinische Forschungen*
BHG	F. Halkin, *Bibliotheca hagiographica Graeca*, I-III, SH 8a (Brussels 1957)
BMGS	*Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*
Bsl	*Byzantinoslavica*
Byz	*Byzantion*
BZ	*Byzantinische Zeitschrift*
CFHB	*Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae*
CSCO Script. syr. ser.	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalim (Paris: Poussielgue; leuven: Peeters, 1904 –)
DOP	*Dumbarton Oaks Papers*
DOS	*Dumbarton Oaks Studies*
JÖB (JÖBG)	*Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik*
JThS	*Journal of Thelogical Studies*
PG	*Patrologiae cursus completus*, series graeca, ed. J.P. Migne (Paris 1857 – 1866)
PO	*Patrologia Orientalis*
REB	*Revue des Etudes Byzantines*
ROC	*Revues de l'Orient Chrétien*
SC	*Sources chrétiennes*
SH	*Subsidia Hagiographica*, ed. Société des Bollandistes (Brussels 1886 –)
ST	*Studi e Testi*

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Fig. 1 a. Wiener Genesis: Potiphar's wife attempting to seduce Joseph

Fig. 1 b. Wiener Genesis: Potiphar's wife accusing Joseph

Fig. 2 a. Wiener Genesis: Pharao's banquet, with female musicians

Fig. 2 b. Wiener Genesis: Joseph in jail

Fig. 3 a. Wiener Genesis: the deaths of Deborrah and Rachel

Fig. 3 b. Wiener Genesis: the death of Isaac

Fig. 4 a. Wiener genesis: the death of Jacob

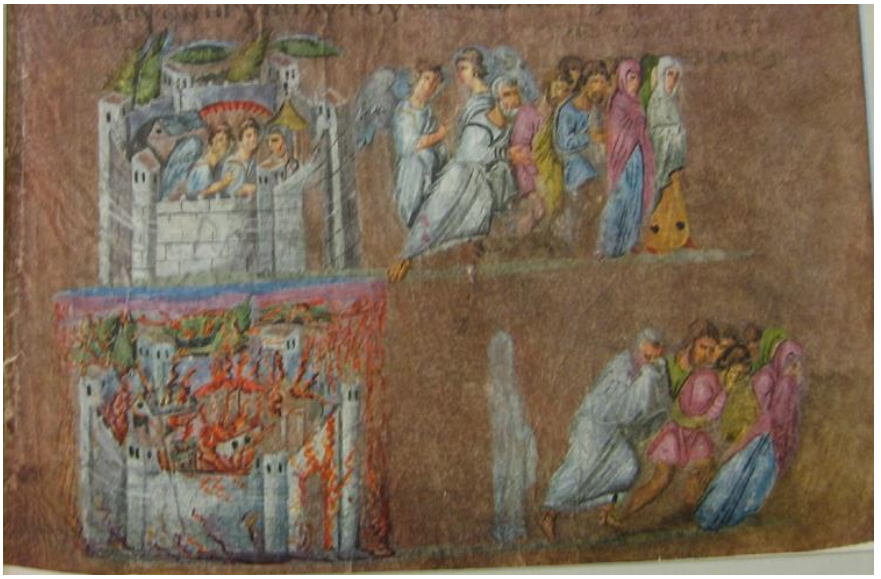


Fig. 4 b. Wiener genesis: fleeing Sodom and Gomorrah

Fig. 5 a. Wiener Genesis: Rebecca at the well

Fig. 5 b. Wiener Genesis: Rebecca home from the well

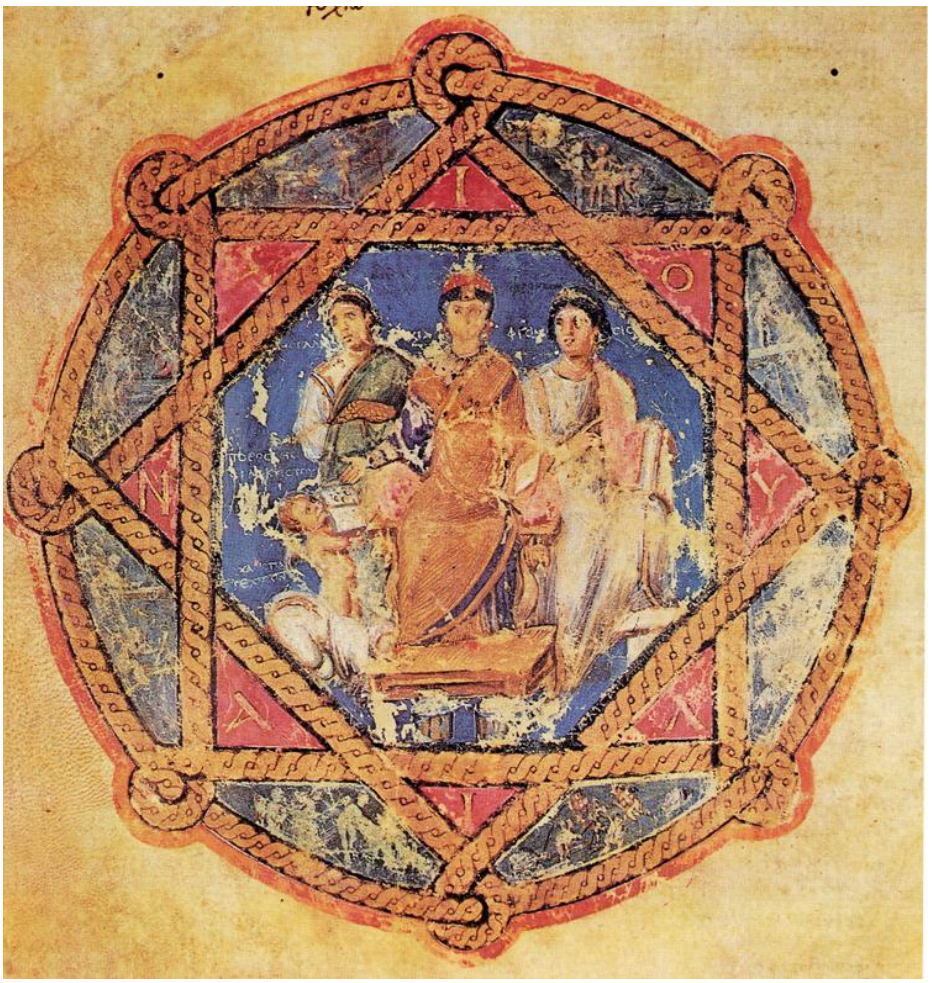


Fig. 6. Wiener Dioscurides: Anicia Juliana

Fig. 7 a. San Vitale, Ravenna: Empress Theodora

Fig. 7 b. San Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna: row of female saints

Fig. 8 a. Part of the topographical boarder of the *Megalopsychia* mosaic, Antioch

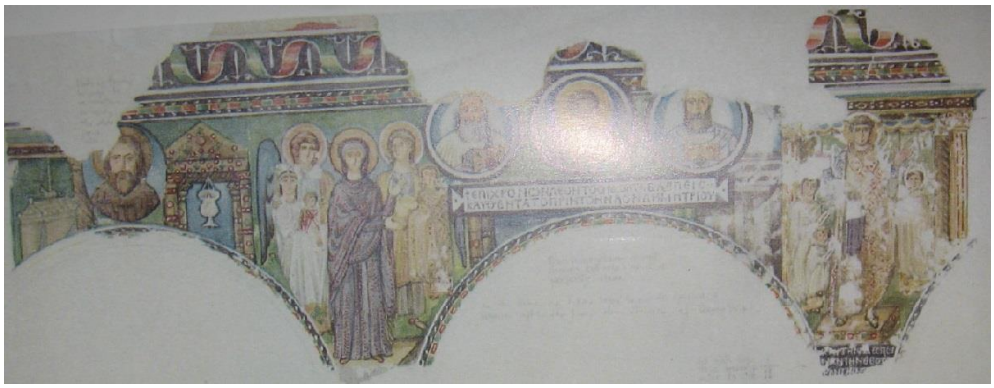
Fig. 8 b. The *Trier Ivory*, Cathedral of Trier (Germany)

Fig. 9 a. Mosaics in the chapel at the Bishop's palace, Ravenna, with female saints

Fig. 9 b. Mosaic in the church of Euphrasius in Porec, Istria, with female saints (the arch and the apsis)

Fig. 10 a. Female portrait in marble (late 4th to the 6th centuries) (possibly Anicia Juliana), Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York)

Fig. 10 b. 6th-century icon of St. Peter, now in Monastery of St. Catherine (Sinai)



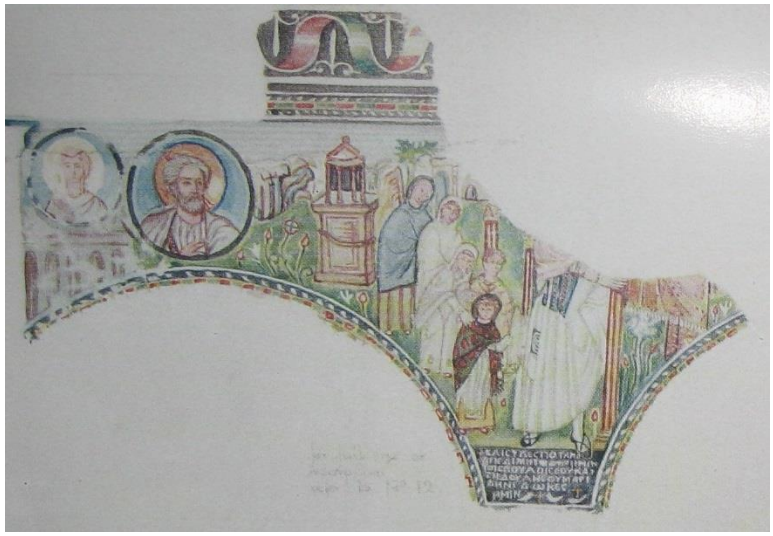


Fig. 11 Water colours by W.S. George of lost mosaics from the church of St. Demetrios, Thessaloniki

Fig. 12 a. Octagonal marriage ring, 7th century, Dumbarton Oaks
Inscriptions: “Harmony”, “Lord, help thy servants, Peter and Theodote”, “Peace I leave with you / My peace I give to you”

Fig. 12 b. Golden halfmoon-shaped earring with peacocks, late-6th – 7th century, The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York)